

Celebrate** Sparkle

A new year

is on the

way and the

possibilities

are endless

I love throwing a party at this time of year. For me, it's all about getting friends and family together to share food, fun – and a few bottles of fizz! Last year, I helped to organise my daughter's winter wedding – a beautiful occasion full of love and happiness, which sums up what the season is all about.

This year, things will be quieter, although I still plan to invite my

closest friends over to share food director Jane's brilliant entertaining menu – see p136. Plus we'll be celebrating my daughter's first wedding anniversary!

If you're looking for a present to take to festive hosts, I've

picked my favourites on p10 – I'm hoping my friends will take the not-so-subtle hint! And it's not too late to take out a w&h subscription – it makes the perfect gift. See p122.

I remember my mother always had a special dress to wear on Christmas Day, and I think we all want to look our best. I prefer a more relaxed look – even simple jeans 'n' jewels – see p86 for inspiration.

We'll also settle down to watch the Strictly Come Dancing Christmas special – I've so enjoyed the latest series. Stylish presenter Claudia Winkleman shares her beauty tips on p49. Plus we have the brilliant Zoë Ball, presenter of Strictly's

weekday sister show *It Takes Two*, on our cover. Zoë is exactly how you see her on TV – friendly, fun, honest and incredibly smart. I would challenge anyone who meets her not to like her. In fact, I want to invite her over to my New Year celebrations – she would make the perfect dinner party guest! Read deputy editor Emma's interview with her on p12. I can't wait to see

more of Zoë on our screens next year...

Of course New Year is traditionally a time when we take stock and look back before making plans to move forward, although I think it's just as important to be mindful and live

in the now. That's why I enjoyed reading Clare, Lara and Sylvia's stories on p60. I admire women who are resourceful and resilient in times of adversity, and they've all made positive changes to their lives after difficult times. One thing that can help with tricky situations is your own intuition – learn how to tap into yours more successfully in 2016 on p50.

On that note, I look forward to meeting and talking to you in 2016 – here's to a fabulous year.

She James

Editorial Director

I'd like to wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year from the woman&home team

editor's letter

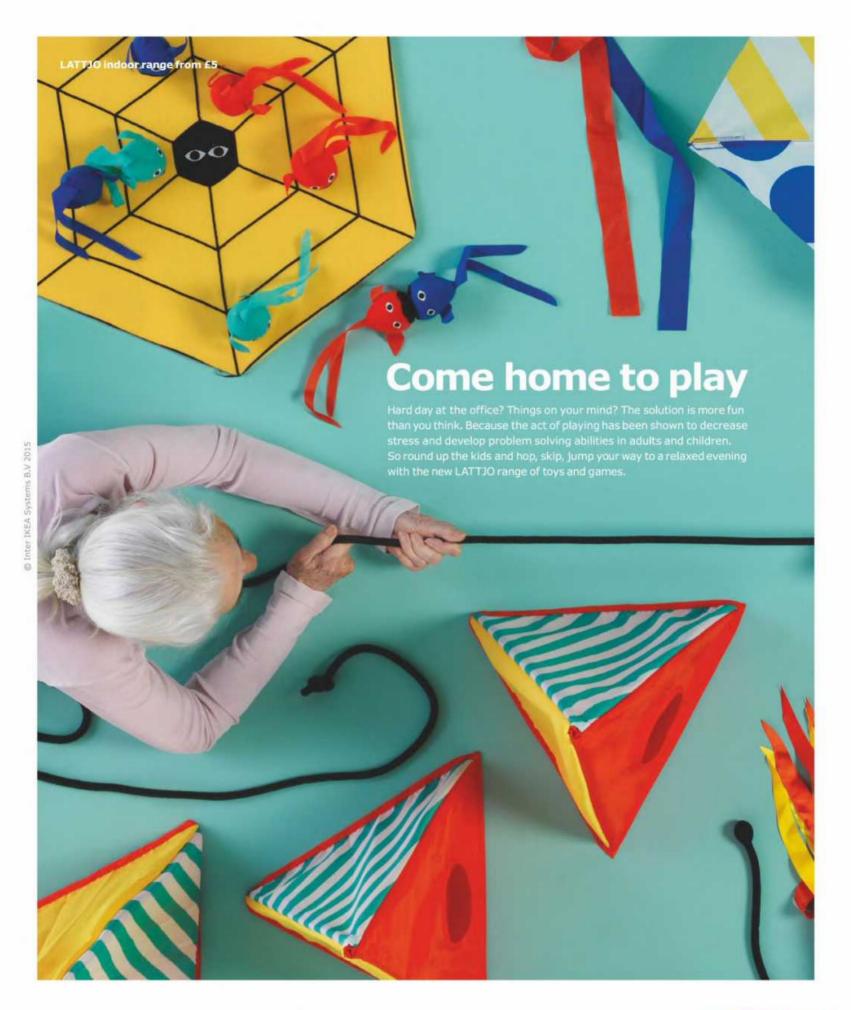
I love to wear a touch of sparkle, like this H&M jewel top on p23



I'll definitely be trying this goats' cheese, red onion and fig focaccia - with a cocktail! (p143)









woman&home

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AT MAKEUPBYHEATHERB.COM USING ESTEE
LAUDER FRINGED JACKET BY GIVENCHY
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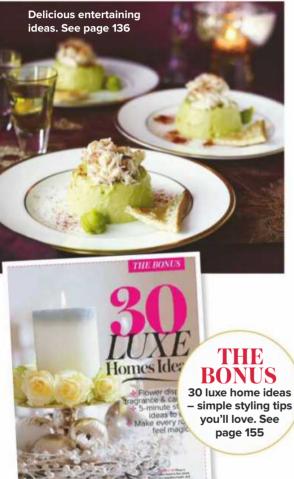
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TWO-DAY
NOURISH EVENT

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TV and radio presenter Zoë Ball, 45, talks to Emma Justice about life on Strictly, and the ups and downs of marriage and motherhood

he first thing you notice walking into Zoë Ball's dressing room is her impressive collection of sparkly shoes. Part of the Strictly "uniform", she wears them to present It Takes Two, the popular Strictly Come Dancing spin-off show on BBC Two every weeknight. What you don't see is that Zoë is also happy to generously lend some of her collection to complete strangers who are the same shoe size as her (that would be a seven).

"A lovely lady tweeted me about a pair I'd worn on the show recently," says Zoë, showing me the pink sequined

ones in question. "She wanted to buy them for her wedding so I asked whether she'd like to wear mine instead. I said I'd even wear them in for her because they're a bit uncomfortable!"

It's typical Zoë. Genuine, warmhearted and funny, she's the kind of girl's girl you instantly want to be friends with. Her popularity soared when she stood in for Claudia Winkleman on the main show last year, and prompted many to call for her to do it full-time.

But for now she's happy in her It Takes Two family. Backstage at the studio, her affinity with the dancers and their celebrity partners is obvious. Something Zoë puts down to having been a

third in 2005 with her partner lan Waite, who now works with her on the show.

What you see really is what you get with Zoë. And it has been since the 90s, when she started her career on the children's Saturday morning TV show Live & Kicking. That was her big break after working as a runner at Granada Television and then a researcher on BSkyB.

Zoë went on to present The Big Breakfast, Top of the Pops and the BRIT Awards, and made history by becoming the first ever female solo presenter of the BBC Radio One Breakfast Show. Incredibly honest, she admits she went off the rails in her late twenties - "I don't remember much of that time" - before marrying DJ Norman Cook, aka Fatboy Slim, in 1999. She settled down, took a break from the spotlight and had two children, Woody, 15 this month, and Nelly, five. The family live in a house on the seafront in Hove, East Sussex.





Most treasured possession?
My Barbra Streisand record
collection – I have every single
LP she's ever released. They were
a present from my friend Helen and
I still love playing them.

Most scared of? Abseiling and anything slightly dangerous. I've got a lot more fearful since becoming a mother. I used to love rollercoasters and riding on the back of motorbikes but I'm worried about something happening to me now.

Last said sorry to? Woody, after he told me something and I realised I wasn't listening to him properly.

Biggest indulgence? Sequined garments and shoes, especially shoes that have sequins on! I'm like a magpie when it comes to shiny things in shops – it's the *Strictly* effect. I'm hoping Nelly has size seven feet so she can inherit my collection.

Describe yourself in three words. Loving, silly and slightly hyperactive.

days are harder than others. If there's a guest on who I admire – like Miranda Hart for example – or Norman or my Dad are in the audience, I totally go to pieces.

A few years ago I was struggling with anxiety so I went to see a confidence coach. She gave me a few pre-show rituals to help calm my nerves. It's all about taking deep breaths and slowing down my heart rate because I can be a bit manic! Saying that, you need a bit of adrenaline to get you through. Live TV is unpredictable and that's what I love about it.

My father taught me humility and the importance of taking time to talk to people and remember their names.

He would take my brothers and me to see him at work when we were kids and I remember how friendly he was to everyone – guests, fans, the crew. My dad continues to work in one way or another and I think I'll be the same.

He's 78 and says he's doing less and less, but he's still writing books and giving lectures at schools and universities.

I could never do anything too serious.

I'd worry about not being intellectual enough. I quite enjoy interviewing on the red carpet at the BAFTAs but I get nervous about speaking to very high-brow directors. I'm definitely most at home with light entertainment. It Takes Two is great fun. It's one of my favourite telly jobs — it's like Live & Kicking but with dancing. My next project is to co-present a new Saturday night game show called Can't Touch This with Ashley Banjo on BBC One, which starts next year. There's a giant assault course contestants have to get through to win prizes.

I'm terrible at keeping track of money

— I'm much better at spending it! When
I tried producing I was useless because
you have to be good at the business
side as well as the creative one.

My plan B was to be Miss Marple!

I became obsessed with Agatha Christie after reading her books as a ten-year-old. My grandfather on my mother's side was a detective and my friends at school used to call me Juliet Bravo because I would always figure out what was going on – mainly because I'm nosy!

ON MARRIAGE

Norman and I try not to be busy at the same time. During the summer, when Norman plays a lot of gigs, I'm usually at home, and vice versa in the autumn when I do *Strictly*. We love our jobs and give each other the support to do them because they make us happy. We count our blessings because it could all end tomorrow. I can't believe that, after 26 years in the industry, I'm still getting work!

People talk about finding the perfect balance. But I'm not sure it exists. Norman is a modern hands-on dad and I've been lucky to have his support and that of my family, plus great childcare. Not everyone is as lucky.



I don't think anyone has the perfect

Romance now is about the little things – like Norman bringing me snacks in bed and recording Homeland for me. If we go on a "date night", we'll just end up talking about the kids and practical stuff like who'll be at home to sign for a delivery. We've just bought another place in the country. It's hidden in a forest and we plan to escape there when our house in Hove gets too busy – people pop in all the time. The kids can't wait to build a tree house.

ON MOTHERHOOD

My children astound me every day.

Watching the two of them grow up is so exciting. Woody is already taller than me and very clever in a nerdy way. I find it hilarious that he and his father make the same lewd jokes. Nelly is beautiful and a real girly girl – the opposite of me because I was a tomboy! She's into dancing and dressing up and is such a daddy's girl. Luckily she's inherited his looks – poor Woody is stuck with my sticky-out ears.

There's so much to deal with as a parent now. Like how much screen time the kids should be allowed. It's hard because I'll tell Woody off for spending too much time on his computer but I'll be on my phone tweeting. If I do he just turns to me and says, "Mum, what are you even talking about? You're on your phone!" Norman is more regimental than me—I'm quite naughty and wind the kids up.

I want to encourage them both to do the things they love. Woody went for a screen test recently and me and

Norman were like,
"Should we be
letting him do this?"
But then I remember
telling my dad that
I wanted to be a TV
presenter and he
gave me a massive
hug and said,
"Brilliant, that's so
exciting." You've got
to follow your heart.



the real me



ON BODY IMAGE AND AGEING

I've accepted I'll never be a size ten and that's fine with me. I put on four stone when I had both my kids, mainly because I didn't exercise and ate everything I could! Now I generally veer between ten-and-a-half and 11 stone.

There's are things about my body that I'm starting not to like. The bagginess, bingo wings and my "mum tum". But I know there's no going back!

I've tried the odd bit of Botox, good and bad, but you can't reverse the ageing process. I love a facial now and again, or a rehydrating face pack. I had a disaster a while ago, where I'd had some fillers put in my lips and it made my mouth wonky on one side. I went for lunch with my mum and I couldn't eat or drink anything without spilling it and drooling. We couldn't stop laughing about it and my mum just said, "Let that be a lesson to you!" Norman pulls out pictures

of actresses in magazines who've gone too far with surgery and says, "Darling, please don't end up like one of these - someone whose face I don't recognise any more."

Life's too short not to have a doughnut sometimes. I don't think

I could ever give up sugar – so I try to do 30 minutes a day on my cross trainer - usually watching a TV show so it feels like a treat. Norman's better than me - he goes to the gym five times a week.

We've both changed our lifestyles.

I gave up alcohol for a while and I think that helped me get pregnant with Nelly - I tell a lot of my friends to do it too if they're having problems, especially when you're older. Of course, if there's a reason to celebrate I'll have a drink - usually only a vodka, lime and soda.

When you get to my age you don't want to stay out all night. I love Saturday evenings at home in my pyjamas in front of the TV. And going for a walk on the beach with the kids then having a roast on a Sunday.

ON FRIENDSHIP

Friends are incredibly important to me - they're there for you through good times and bad, marriages, children. career problems. We all help each other, they make me laugh at life and myself. I'm the oldest of my group of friends, most of whom aren't in showbusiness.

Everything changes when you have children and it's difficult to keep up with people. We all have busy lives. But now my children are older, I feel I'm coming out of that, so can pick up with friends where I left off.

ON THE FUTURE

"Life is too

short not to

have a doughnut

give up sugar"

If I'd done anything differently I wouldn't be where I am now. I've made mistakes and messed up but somehow things have still worked out OK. I think it's because I've always trusted my gut instinct.

Now I want to sit back and enjoy the ride a bit more. We lost my stepdad Rick

two years ago to motor neurone disease and it was incredibly hard. Suddenly you realise how fragile life is and how you've got to make sometimes. I don't the most of it. It was heartbreaking to see my think I could ever mother lose the man she loved but she was very strong. I'm so proud that she's started to help other

people who've lost relatives to the disease.

I don't usually make New Year's resolutions although I did find a list I'd written a couple of years ago.

It read: "Learn how to swing dance, study French and read more books." Obviously I've done none of them!

Generally I want to remain happy and healthy. I asked Norman what his hopes and dreams were for this coming year and he just said, "I'd quite like to put these shelves up..." That's middle age for you, isn't it?

Zoë presents It Takes Two, weeknights on BBC Two, and Can't Touch This starts on BBC One in 2016. Zoë is also a regular presenter on BBC Radio Two w&h



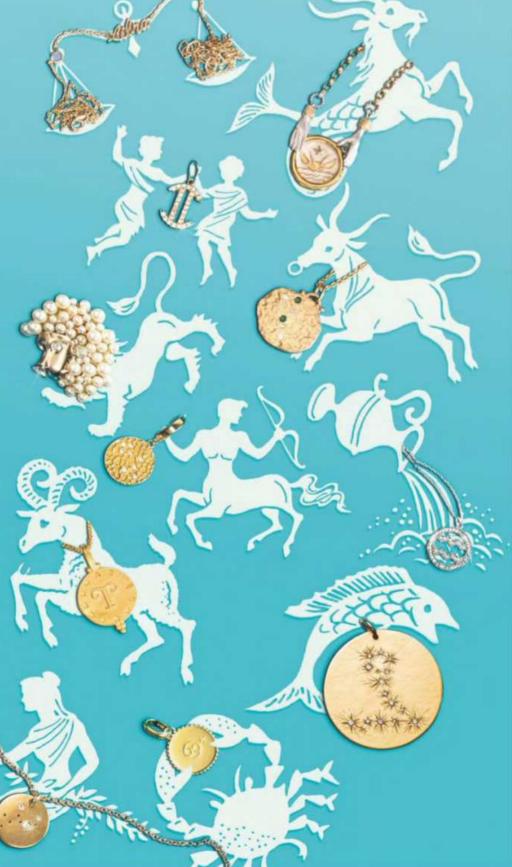


A zodiac charm for your star sign will keep your jewellery firmly in the ascendent for 2016

The superstitious Christian Dior was fascinated by the zodiac, hence the wonderful "Tell Me Dior" collection launched by the iconic house. Timeless and personal, this is one jewellery trend that has really lasted. Charlie Moore picks the best designs...

Libra Gold plated brass and opal necklace, £39, Astrid & Miyu. Capricorn 18ct gold plated over sterling silver necklace, £315, Jessica de Lotz. Gemini 14ct gold and pavé diamonds, £430, Sydney Evan. Taurus 18ct gold plated over sterling silver and emerald necklace, £225, Decï. Leo Gold plated, crystals and resin beads, £370, Dior. Sagittarius 18ct gold and diamond double-sided pendant, £1,300, Theo Fennell at Harrods. Aquarius 9ct white gold, silver and diamond set necklace, £255, Laura Lee. Aries Gold plated over silver and diamond doublesided necklace, £210, Van Peterson. Pisces 18ct gold vermeil over sterling silver and diamonds, £497, Sibylle Jewels at notonthehighstreet.com. Scorpio 18ct matt gold pendant, £450, Annoushka.

Virgo 18ct gold plated over silver necklace, £95, Yvonne Henderson. **Cancer** 18ct gold vermeil, £55, Links of London **w**&h



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KARREN BRADY

OUR BRILLIANT COLUMNIST WRITES EXCLUSIVELY FOR W&H EACH MONTH

"This is the perfect time of year to be in touch with your spirituality and who you really are"

To paraphrase what Joseph Campbell, the famous mythologist, once said, "We are not looking for the meaning of life as much as the experience of being alive." And around December, when the flickering of candlelight and the sound of carols give us all a spiritual feeling – even though we may not be churchgoers – it is a good time to be in touch with your spirituality.

Spirituality is vital to living, but it should not be confused with religion. Spirituality, for me, is living your life with an open heart. Being accepting, kind, being open to ideas and thoughts and becoming the best of you.

Your spirit is what makes you who you are. It is not what you do. When we describe

ourselves, we often list our job, our responsibilities, our successes or our failures as the determination of ourselves. But spirituality is the answer from the purest, deepest part of you to the questions: Who am I? What do I want out of life? What is my purpose? What are my talents?

Spirituality is not the role you play in life; it is not "I am a mother"; it is not "I am a company director". It is who you really are and what you really stand for. These are your core values that guide you and set you on your path – they make you the person you are and allow you to take the decisions you make.

I guess your spirit is really your soul, and your soul is who you are behind the mask that everyone sees and knows. It is the real you. Spirituality guides your instinct. It's when you know what to do, even though you don't know why you know. Because your soul is made up of your insights, your past experiences and your memories. It's why we learn from the past, live in the moment, and hope for the future.

And how often do you forget to live in the moment? So often we let life pass us by, with

> our noses pressed to the grind of living and working;

being concerned about what we didn't do, or what we should have done.

Life is made up of many things beyond what you do, did or didn't do, and these things feed the spirit of who you are. For me they are family, friends, laughter, food, sex, wine and travel! They are the things I do not because I have to, but because I want to and find joy in. And you have to search yourself to find them.

You have to pay attention to those moments – otherwise time flies by and, before you know it, you don't know what makes you happy any more. w&h



woman&home A BRAND NEW ATTITUDE 19



























Layering necklaces

One is never enough! Cluster pendant necklaces together or cheat with a pre-layered version that can be worn in multiple ways Left, £15, Accessorize.
Right, £115, Stella & Dot

BREAK THE RULES

- the new guide to party dressing

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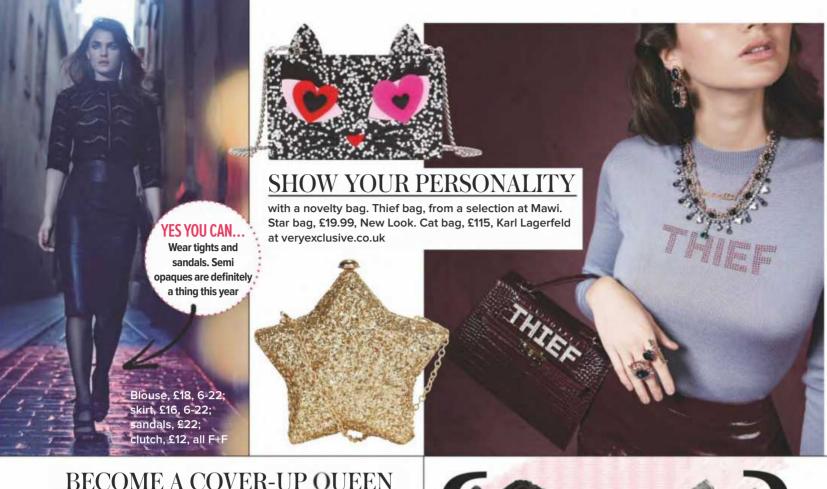




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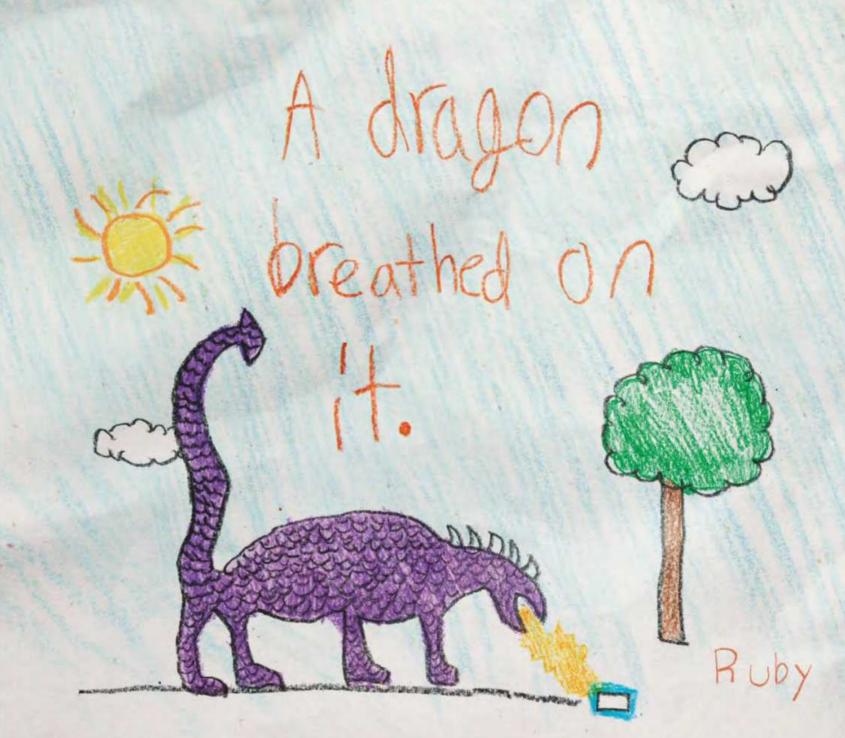
BECOME A COVER-UP QUEEN

No one will recognise that LBD you wore last year as they'll be coveting what you're wearing over it. Cape, £95, 4-18, ASOS. Tassels, £39, 6-22, F+F. Kimono, £79, S-L, Biba at House of Fraser









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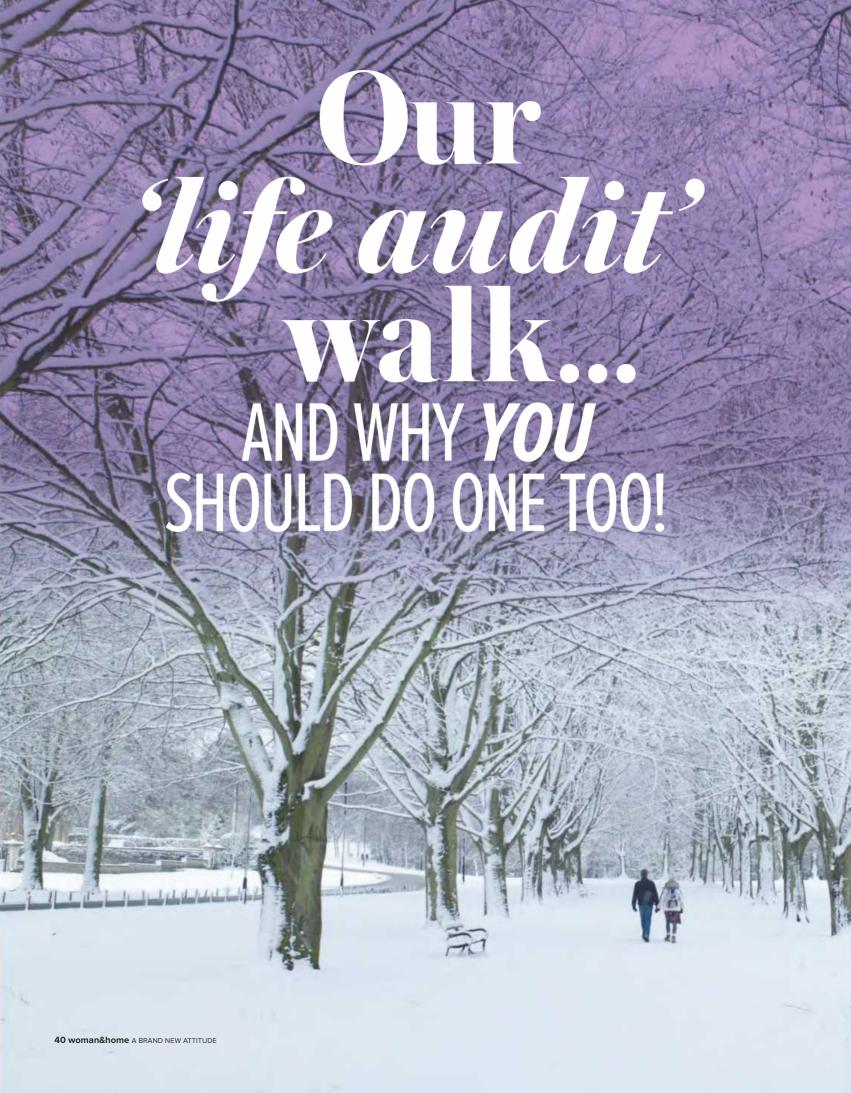


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Every year, Libby Purves and her husband, the broadcaster Paul Heiney, take a post-Christmas walk to take stock of the past year - and make plans for the one ahead

ouples should talk, right? We all know that. It's the most basic tenet of marriage guidance. But face it, the communication gets fragmented in the hurly-burly of life, and jobs, and children's myriad needs and troubles, and the hundred things that go wrong with houses and cars and overdrafts and holiday plans and tax returns and ageing parents.

So we spend years in crisis management – fire-fighting, reacting valiantly to events and batting away

It was the

Annual General

Meeting for just

the two of us

potential disasters one by one. I used to have a recurring dream in which I was at the bottom of a pit, like a children's ball pond, and people kept throwing down plastic balls at me,

and I had to throw them back before I got 🔹 buried, and they came bouncing down around me faster and faster until I woke up in a panic remembering the kitchen drain, the difficult unwritten letter, the school trip money, the dry-cleaning...

But as any business guru will tell you, dealing with events day by day is only the half of it. You need some sort of strategy. To manage anything, even a family, you sometimes have to stand back for a moment and see how close you are getting to your mission statement (even though it probably just reads "keep going, keep everyone upright and smiling and solvent, that'll do"). You almost need to draft an Annual Report to Shareholders, even though the shareholders share a bed. On the human resources front, you also need to check that management colleagues are all singing from the same song sheet, and want the same things.

So let me pass on something we discovered in the busy years when the children were small. We invented, quite deliberately, the Annual General Meeting Walk. We didn't leave it to chance, but booked it - for Boxing Day or New Year's Day (depending on weather forecasts,

and when we could get our stalwart babysitter Granny Joyce to come round for the day). Settling the children down with her and the Christmas loot to play with, we put on weatherproof jackets and strode out of the house with a thermos – sometimes even sandwiches - heading across country for a really good stretch of a walk, with long views.

Where we lived in Suffolk that was easy, but even in the most urban setting there is bound to be some hill, park or towpath to give a sense of perspective,

a metaphor for the journey through life.

It had to be just the two of us. There were other winter holiday walks of course, in gangs with relatives and multiple dogs

We didn't actually

take a printed

agenda – that's

taking it too far

and scampering or grumbling children, and babies in slings and meetings at a tea shop. But this was different - it was the Annual General Meeting for just the two of us. We were both on the Board of Directors and, at times, had a rabble of shareholders asking tricky questions.

We didn't actually take a printed agenda - that would be carrying things a bit too far. But we worked through topics,

deliberately. Start with the basics – are we happy with the house and where we live? How is the mortgage doing? Is there anything that would make home life better - could there be an

office in the garden shed and, if so, who would use it most? Are we managing the garden OK? Would a new washing machine be a better use of money than that groovy posh steel fridge with the ice-maker that you are coveting? Is the commuting OK – is it worth the train in order to live somewhere nice like this and, if not, how much longer do you think you can bear it? How's the money generally? What do we hope for in the next 12 months? And what did we do right and wrong in the past 12 months?

One moves on from basic questions to personal ones. Are you OK, or are you bored with what you do? Are we sharing out the house jobs fairly? And the children - you take them one by one, reflecting on difficult phases, school problems, health worries. Not the little daily things like colds, but whether they seem fit and happy and active, or whether one or other of you has been noticing something; nagging at it privately without a chance to raise the matter with the other parent because it never seemed like the right moment.

What about the school, nursery, playgroup - honestly, is it working? Do the kids see enough of their grandparents, or too much of one lot and not enough of the other? On that subject, are in-laws driving either of you mad? Or maybe one of you is a bit sad at living so far from siblings or parents, with few trips or visits. Oh yes, and this business about getting a dog/cat/ rabbit/hamster... shall we calmly discuss the pros and cons for once?

I sense a certain horror – you may imagine the walk descending into marital mayhem, if not someone getting violently shoved into the nettles, or indeed the canal. But because it IS a walk - and both of you are a little bit short of breath - the replies to hard questions tend to come more slowly than usual, giving vital time for thought. And because you're walking side by side, or with one sometimes moving ahead for a few paces on a narrow bit of the path, there's none of that naturally confrontational attitude

> you get in a weary late-night face-off across the kitchen table with an imprudent bottle of wine.

Besides, just when you get to the dangerous bit about the posh fridge,

potential dog or tricky in-law, one of you may notice a squirrel doing something pleasingly cute with a nut.

And you pause, and gain a moment to think of something conciliating to say. Or find yet another reason not to have a puppy.

I tell you, it worked for us. Honest. Thirty-five years and counting. Happy New Year!

Libby Purves is the author of Nature's Masterpiece: A Family Survival Book (Hodder & Stoughton) w&h



ready to

From getting ready in 15 minutes to dancing around to Queen, five famous faces share their secrets for a great celebration

Singer Kim Wilde, 55, lives with her husband, actor Hal Fowler, and their two children Rose, 15, and Harry, 17, in Hertfordshire.

From a very young age, I knew the music industry was where I wanted to be. I sang as a backing singer for my father [Marty Wilde] from 15 but my mum was also a session singer back in the 50s and 60s, so I thought that's where I was heading myself. When I left art college though, I started doing demos with my brother, Ricky, who I've always been close to and who's now the MD of my band, and within a very short time, Kids in America was written. Then my fate was sealed.

Now my house is full of all kinds of different music! My daughter Rose is a singer-songwriter and does local gigs when she's not studying for her GCSEs, while Harry is lead guitarist in a rock band called Keid. Then there's my husband Hal, who's currently working at the National Theatre on Damon Albarn's musical, wonder.land, so I'm hearing about his adventures every

day. There's no getting away from music, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

Fame took me on a crazy ride and in the latter part of the 80s, I needed something to calm me down, so I turned to gardening; it became a kind of therapy. One of my great loves as a child was playing in the garden with my brother – collecting rose petals and making perfume. I was never one of those girls who wore cute dresses – I was always covered in mud! Now I'm in the garden most weekends and I recently did a car park garden for a local charity called Waste Not Want Not, which uses horticulture to help homeless people, ex-addicts and offenders.

People might think I'm a party animal because of a YouTube video of me and Ricky from a while back having a tipsy singalong on the train home! In fact my idea of a great party these days is quite sedate, with very close friends, some nice food and wine and lovely music. That's why I love New Year's Eve when we invite a handful of our closest friends over and enjoy being together.

Christmas is also a chance to reflect on where you are in life. Have you made up with that person you fell out with? I'm not very good with New Year's resolutions – just like I'm not very good with diets, but I recently did a girls' trip to France with four friends I've known since I was about eight, which is something I want to do more of.

My Christmas album Wilde Winter Songbook is very personal to me; it's mostly original songs, but I've done covers too, including Wham!'s Last Christmas, which I sang with Ricky, and his daughter Scarlett. My favourite though is Deck the Halls (Angels Sing) – if you'd told me 30 years ago that one day I'd write a carol, I would never have believed you. It's performed by the London Contemporary Voices Choir and hearing them bring it to life was a highlight of my career.

Kim Wilde's Wilde Winter Songbook Deluxe Edition with bonus DVD is out now. Kim performs at O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire, London on 18 December with special guests Heaven 17 and Altered Images. Visit kimwilde.com >>



"Before a party, I often feel tired and think I won't stay long, but then actually I'm the last one to leave!"

Actress Natasha Little, 46, lives in Essex with her husband and fellow actor Bo Poraj, 42. They have two sons, Gabriel, 11, and Joel, six.

I love parties, but although we often have up to 20 people over for lunch, we haven't had a "real" party at our house for ages. When you have kids, though, opening a packet of crisps and putting on some music is a party! When the boys were younger we'd often put on Survivor's Eye of the Tiger or some Queen and have a bop.

I'm a secret party animal. Before a party, I often feel tired and I'll tell myself I won't stay that long, but then actually be the last to leave. I'll have had one glass too many and be grabbing people's ankles begging them to stay!

On Christmas Day I'd rather have a lovely time than waste it worrying that everything's perfect. We'll be spending this year as we always do – at ours with my mother-in-law, aunts and uncles and various friends. Bo is a terrific cook, so he's in control in the kitchen while I'm a great sous chef. We play charades and Heads Up!, a phone app game. I'll put out flowers and try to make the table look good, but in the past when I've

tried too hard, things have tended to fall apart. Now I'm more relaxed and polishing the silver takes a backseat.

Bo is good at lots of things but not Christmas shopping. We tend to keep a day to go shopping together but separately. Last year, when we regrouped, I had sped around and bought 17 great gifts. He was still on a second cappuccino contemplating how stressful it all was. My dad's wife runs a charity in the Philippines so I sometimes give a donation and then smaller token gifts. I love giving charity gifts. This year I'm going to buy blankets and coats for Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon through World Vision's Must Have Gifts catalogue (musthavegifts.org). We moved around lots when I was younger and spent time in the Middle East – it's an area I remember with great affection.

For me, getting ready to go out is a mad scramble to get the kids settled and us out the door. I'd love to say I spend hours in a luxurious bath then cover myself in expensive body lotion before spending ages on my make-up, but sometimes I just have time to shave my legs! I rarely wear nail varnish, so if I do have time to paint my nails I always feel more elegant. I painted them red the other day and felt very vampy!

Sitting in the make-up chair being transformed for a part, you can't help but pick up some tips. I have very straight eyelashes so I'm delighted to have found Japonesque Eyelash Curlers. I also love Laura Mercia Secret Brightening Powder – it's good at hiding dark circles under your eyes.

I've given up on making resolutions around food or dieting – I never keep them. We moved house recently from London to a slightly bigger house in Essex. We're still near the capital but the air feels different and there's a slightly different tempo to life. So my resolution this year is to enjoy this and get more of a work-life balance.

Natasha Little is Ambassador for World Vision, the world's largest international children's charity, worldvision.org.uk. She stars in BBC One series, The Night Manager, which starts in February 2016



in our experience

Actress Kim Cattrall, 59, is best known for her role as Samantha in Sex and the City. She is single and lives in New York.

I'm currently performing in a play, Linda, over here, so I'm spending Christmas in London. I'm going to relax, go for walks and listen to music. I will have a tree in the little flat I'm staying in close to the theatre. I will probably spend Christmas Day with friends, going over at midday.

What's extraordinary about *Linda* is that the playwright, Penelope Skinner, is a woman in her thirties, yet I felt she'd crawled inside my head. It's about a woman who has spent more time in the boardroom than her living room — and what she's sacrificed. I'm also making a very dark TV comedy, *Sensitive Skin*, again about a woman in a midlife crisis. It's a scary but exciting time for me now.

I love to go to parties for maybe an hour. I prefer intimate parties, otherwise it can go on too long – when someone who's maybe not your closest friend wants just another drink!

I'm pushing myself as I get older to be less safe. We're all frightened because we don't know what's ahead of us. I don't have answers; I only have questions. Even telling someone you love them is a vulnerable place because they might say, "Thanks but I don't feel the same!"

One of the most powerful lessons my dad taught me was, "Luck is where preparation meets opportunity." When I auditioned for theatre schools I was prepared and was accepted by a very good one. I wasn't wishing and hoping; I'd done the work. The most painful thing about my father's dementia was its inconsistency because sometimes he'd recognise me and sometimes he couldn't. It's been three years since he died and I'm still coming to terms with it.

I was born in Liverpool and am a huge fan of Liverpool FC. Given their form, it will be a little too painful for me to watch Liverpool's match on Boxing Day. But once a Red always a Red!

Kim is appearing in Linda at the Royal Court Theatre, London until 9 January 2015, royalcourttheatre.com

"Instant glamour means a bright lip or dramatic lashes... and mojitos to drink!"

Former Spice Girl Emma Bunton, 39, is a DJ on Heart Radio. She lives in Hertfordshire with her fiancé, musician Jade Jones, and their sons, Beau, eight, and Tate, four.

Christmas is my absolute favourite time of the year. We're very family-orientated – we all get together on Christmas Eve, put our pyjamas on and play games. My whole family will stay with me – my mum, two brothers, nieces and nephews. On Christmas Day itself, we like to stay indoors, just veg out and listen to Michael Bublé. Jade does all the cooking, thank goodness. My job is to open the wine. Then I'll be with my dad on Boxing Day [Emma's parents separated when she was 11].

When it comes to instant glamour, I'll either do dramatic lashes or a bright lip – one or the other. I do like dresses and I'll wear a dress in the evening if I have an event, but for lunch I like skinny jeans, a very high heel and a leather jacket.

Disney On Ice has become something we do every year; it kick-starts our Christmas. I've grown up with Disney, and now my children love it too. This year the characters from *Frozen* are taking part – my youngest is obsessed with the film, so he'll be very excited.

When I was 25, I was told there was a 50/50 chance that I couldn't have children after being diagnosed with endometriosis – that was a scary, scary time. I have nieces, nephews, cousins – I've always wanted children. So knowing I might not have had them makes this time of the year even more special. My children mean everything to me.

I turn 40 in January and I've nothing special planned – but I'll definitely have some kind of party and I know there will be mojitos. When we're out, Mel C and I always have mojitos; that's our thing. Hopefully the other Spice Girls will be there too. I loved my 30th;

it felt really exciting. But now I'm hitting my forties, it all suddenly feels a bit more daunting, very grown up.

My mantra is to try to say yes to everything – even things that take you out of your comfort zone. For instance, I'm terrified of heights, so this year I've been to Go Ape [the adventure park with zip wires]. And I'm scared of spiders so when Heart Radio did a phobia week I stupidly agreed to put a tarantula on my head! My New Year's resolution is to try and enjoy my forties, not worry... and stop eating so many sweets.

Emma Bunton is the new Disney On Ice Ambassador. For more information on all current UK tours and tickets, visit disneyonice.co.uk >>



in our experience

"I can go from jeans and a T-shirt and no make-up to party ready in 15 minutes if I have to"

Actress Joan Collins, 82, lives in London and the South of France with her husband, Percy. She has three children and three grandchildren.

I started making baubles for my tree when my children were babies, and every Christmas I would make seven or eight balls, so now there are hundreds. They're quite beautiful, made with seguins and ribbons and lace. I just gave a whole bunch to Tara, my daughter; that's one of our traditions. I'll be spending this festive season with Percy, my brother, his children - and hopefully my daughter Katy will be around too. My perfect Christmas is in London because it's more suited to the weather to have a real fir tree, a big one. Percy does the cooking - he likes it! I do the laying of the table though.

The best present I have ever received is from Percy. He bought me a beautiful diamond heart with an arrow through it and a "PG" and "JC". I wear it a lot.

For parties, my favourite designer is me! I've designed a great many of my clothes – I can never find anything that I really like to wear at night so I design my own. Luckily I have a great couturier in LA who makes me things.

One of the best fun things about a party is getting ready for it, planning it. When we go there it often can be quite disappointing. I spent the whole of this summer in the South of France where there are parties all the time – some of them are fabulous, and some are really not worth going to! I'd rather go and have dinner with five friends.

If I really have to, I can get ready very quickly. Recently we were going to a very smart wedding in Gordes, in the South of France. We got lost and by the time we got there it was 5.15 – and the

wedding was at 5.30. I had to go from jeans, a T-shirt and no make-up to ready in 15 minutes — which I did! It came down to the dress of course. With the make-up, I quickly did a little bit on my eyes and a bright lipstick. Normally I can do daytime make-up in less than ten minutes, night-time 20-25 minutes. It depends if I wear eyelashes, which I hate.

Lipstick is the queen of cosmetics. If you're going to leave every other piece of make-up behind, wear a lipstick. The inspiration for the new Timeless Beauty collection was that I wanted women to have make-up that they could wear from the ages of 15-90. I wanted women to appreciate that make-up is the most important arsenal in their beauty regime – that and taking care of your skin.

I don't think I will ever recover from the sadness of losing my beautiful baby sister [Jackie died from breast cancer in September]. Someone once said: "The reality is you don't 'get over' the loss of a loved one, you learn to live with it." I think Jackie would have liked us to do more than that. As she requested, I will not mourn her death, but rather celebrate her life.

The inspirational quote I live by is: life is a banquet, and most poor suckers are starving to death. That's what I think: life is what you make of it and you've got to grab it and hold on to it.

Timeless Beauty is available from Urban Retreat, QVC and Harrods, joancollinsbeauty.com w&h MERRYLEES, NATHALIE WHIT AIR IAN MCINTOSH AT CAROL RN OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS N

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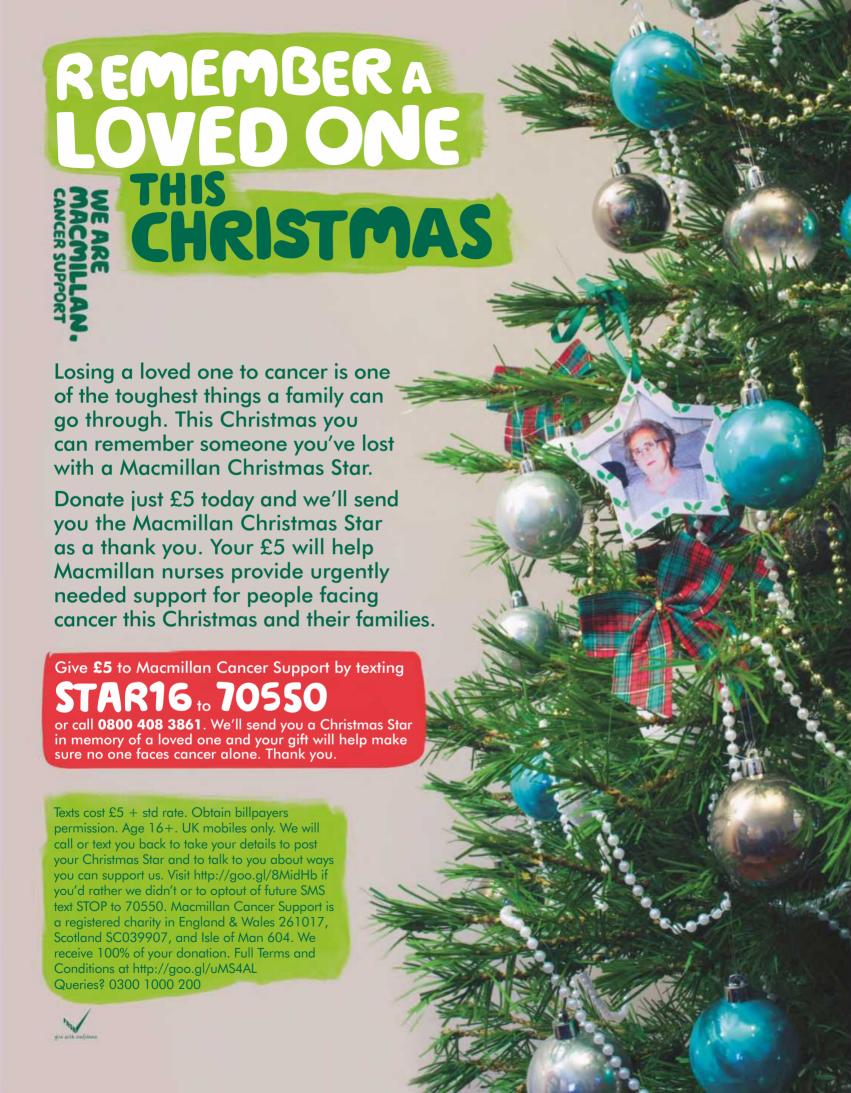
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TV presenter Claudia Winkleman talks to Charlotte Williamson about her beauty role models and why she's such a strict mum

laudia Winkleman's look is nothing short of iconic: the long fringe, pale lipstick and eyeliner. It is so unmistakably her, in fact, that Marks & Spencer invited her to create her own beauty products, and chose a simple black-and-white shot of the famous fringe and eyes to promote the range. Claudia, 43, is married to film producer Kris Thykier, and they live in London with their children, Jake, 12, Matilda, nine, and Arthur, four.

I'm obsessed by eyeliner. It's my armour and gives me a real confidence boost.

And weirdly, 99 per cent Eyeliner is my of the correspondence I receive is about what armour – it gives conditioner I use. I was me a boost expecting letters to be from nice, hot 28-year-olds going, "Can I take you out?" But I get none of those; only questions about conditioner. So they're both part of the range - the eyeliner comes with a smudge stick, and the conditioner makes hair shinier than glass.

The best beauty advice I've ever received is: get back to bed. I could sleep forever. I like to be under a duvet by 9.30. I wish

I could say that when I was younger, I'd stay out until 2am. But that would only be because I'd locked myself out. I was basically born 65.

Growing up, my mum [former newspaper editor Eve Pollard] was a waft of glamour - great dresses, perfume and hairspray. And I loved playing with her make-up. But she was always strict and just wanted me to do my homework, so she wouldn't let me put it on. She was a feminist before anyone even used that word.

> My daughter's not into make-up yet; she's a bit too young. Like my mother, I'm quite a strict mum too. And I try to keep them all really

12, said to me the other day, "Mum, I can do this by myself!" And I replied, "Don't be ridiculous. You can do everything by yourself when you're 18."

My beauty inspirations are Jack Sparrow, Steven Tyler and Chrissie Hynde. Slightly dishevelled but with the promise of filth. I like a buckled boot,

little. My eldest son, who's

a heavy black coat and a lot of eyeliner.



I shortened my fringe because of the Strictly viewers. People were getting grumpy, so I thought it was only polite to have a trim. Chrissie Hynde, who is one of my heroes, has a fringe down to her chin. I saw her recently in the Radio 2 reception. She has to actually sweep her fringe to one side, just to answer a question. Which is where I'll end up. But not yet.

Tess [Daly, her co-presenter on Strictly] and I are properly good friends and we regularly meet up outside work. My daughter is obsessed with her elder daughter. We do some major chatting together and eat a lot of pizza.

You have never met anybody in your life who likes Christmas more than me. If I could hire baby reindeer, I would. I love Christmas food, I love the clothes you wear around Christmas - heavy black funnel-necked coats, big scarves, mittens.

The best thing that's happened this year? Oh, every year's the same my children. For instance, the little one realising that he'd like a stegosaurus more than a puppy. My life is just kids - kids and eyeliner. That's all you need.

The Claudia range is available from Marks & Spencer now w&h



NEver doubt yours



Your gut instinct is your wisest adviser. Anna Moore explores how you can tap into the voice within – and why women rely on it more than men

rom the moment we wake up, switch on our phones and turn on the radio, we're surrounded by news, views and noise, all competing for our attention.

Life is fast, we're on the move and constantly connected, so when it comes to myriad daily decisions, our response is to gather endless data and canvass opinion, sift it, sort it, analyse and overthink. (What shall I wear for this meeting? Is my teenage daughter unhappy? Shall I change jobs? Does my mother have the care she needs?)

Often, we know the answers to all these questions – if we'd only stop and listen to our feelings. So how do we tap into our most ancient source of wisdom?

THE SCIENCE BEHIND INTUITION

The Expert: PROFESSOR GERARD P HODGKINSON, professor of strategic management and behavioural science at Warwick Business School, is internationally known for his work on rational and intuitive decision-making

......

What is it?

It has been called the "sixth sense", and wrongly considered "woo woo". In fact, intuition is as rooted to reality as rational thought. Humans have evolved two

systems of reasoning. One is "conscious thought" – slow and requires effort, it comes from the thinking part of our brain. The other is our more primitive system of "intuition" – fast and automatic, it comes from the emotional part of our brain.

Our intuition remembers patterns, feelings, clues and cues from the past. It gathers lessons learned and stores them up for future use. So, your marriage hits a rocky patch that you and your husband manage to survive. Five years on, you have a feeling something is wrong again but don't know why. It's probably your intuition picking up the tiny signs, the early patterns from last time that you didn't know you knew, your husband's body language, tone of voice. In other words, intuition taps into your deepest knowledge, built up over a lifetime.

What does it feel like?

It's a feeling of absolutely knowing something

without knowing why. It could be shouting the answer to a question – which way to go with your Intuition is a gut feeling. It tends to take over when we're under pressure

business – or nagging you to get a second opinion on that minor health niggle. It doesn't feel conscious; it's a gut feeling. It tends to take over when we're under pressure – overloaded by information, in acute danger or short of time. Our conscious thought can't answer so intuition kicks in.

Do women do it best?

Yes and no. There's no scientific evidence for "women's intuition", but women tend to be jugglers, keeping homes, family and career all running smoothly. This requires constant quick judgement (my son's struggling at school/my client seems to be edging away/no one will want X for dinner). This multitasking means that women rely more on automatic, unconscious reasoning and are more likely to let intuition guide them.

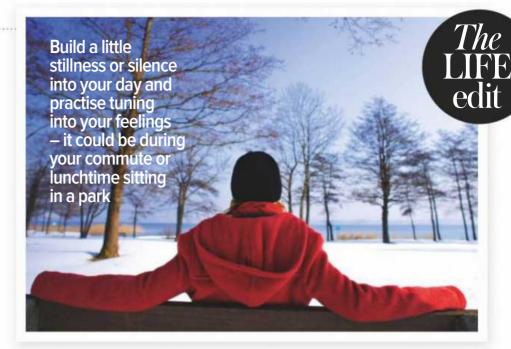
HOW CAN YOU TAP INTO YOURS?

The Expert: SAM OWEN, psychologist and life coach, has a special interest in helping clients follow their intuition (relationshipscoach.co.uk)

Intuition isn't foolproof – nor is conscious thought. Sometimes, poring over the data and painstaking analysis of the pros and cons can still lead down the wrong path. Similarly, following your feelings can also be a mistake as intuition can be swayed off course by your emotions – blind fear, a black mood, wishful thinking. So how do you make the most of both systems?

Learn to listen

Intuition is physical, not verbal. We feel it in our bodies, not our conscious mind - and sometimes we miss it because life is too fast and frantic to take note. Build a little stillness or silence into your day and practise tuning into your feelings - it could be during your commute (without being lost in your phone) or lunchtime sitting in a park. Focusing on your feelings should help you hear them when intuition speaks. Notice the physical signs. Is it a warm glow telling you something is right? Or a tension in the shoulders, a churning stomach, a tightening smile signalling danger? Once you recognise the feelings, learn to trust them. One option is to have a notebook handy and record them as and when they happen. Over time, as situations pan out, you can assess how often they were right.



Test it out

Challenge your intuition with a tough decision. It could be a house move, a career crossroad, a family dilemma. Set out your options and imagine taking each route. Don't think, don't analyse – feel instead. How does your body respond to each scenario? Does one make you feel tense and tight, while another feels right? When you

have your answer, then it's time for conscious thought. Use what your body is telling you as your guide then couple it with some logical questions: "Is this my body sensing danger or is it just fear warning me off because I'm too frightened to take the leap?" If needs be, explain your gut feeling to someone you trust and together unearth the reason behind it.

INTUITION AT WORK

Intuition can be valuable at meetings and negotiations. It may tell you how to pitch to a client or warn you that one of your team isn't happy. The point to remember is that intuition is acquired through experience. Before running with it, ask, "Do I have the expertise to trust this feeling?" and "Are there clues around me that back it up?"

INTUITION AT HOME

No one knows your family like you. You know when your mum is worried and what not to say to your husband when there's an issue. And your intuition is often right about new relationships, for example, when you go on a date and feel immediately it won't work. You know your body, too, and if you sense something's wrong, pursue a second opinion.

'My intuition saved my life'



Joanne Todd, 45, works for the fire service. She lives in Bedfordshire with her husband and four sons.

"It started with a tiny

lump below my bottom teeth. My dentist prescribed antibiotics but it didn't go away. I went back for an X-ray and the results showed a shadow, but still I was told not to worry. As a child I was hit in the face by a swing and everyone

thought this shadow was remnants from that. My dentist referred me for a non-urgent hospital appointment.

"Everyone was telling me to wait but I knew something was badly wrong. I couldn't wait in the system and though I'd never gone private, I called my local private hospital and saw a consultant within 48 hours.

"He also thought it was nothing but agreed to remove the lump which

would be routinely biopsied. The results shocked everyone. It was a high-grade, aggressive form of bone cancer – osteosarcoma – which usually appears in large bones, like the leg.

"What followed was a five-hour operation to remove two thirds of my jaw, then six months of chemotherapy. Ten years on, after regular monitoring, I've been signed off.

"It would have been easy to put the lump to the back of my mind, but my body was screaming out to me to get it checked. I'm so thankful I did." w&h

Our Christmas is... Out terms is...

From a first Christmas without the family to spending time with a former husband, three writers reflect on how their festive celebrations have changed

'This will be my first childfree Christmas in 19 years'



Lucy Cavendish, 48, lives in Oxfordshire with her four children, Raymond, 19, Leonard, 12, Jerry, 11 and Ottoline, eight.

This Christmas,

I will be doing something I never thought possible. I'm spending Christmas without my four children. Instead, I shall be tucked away in a cottage in the Lake District with my new partner. There will be no big family meal, no shouting and squeals of delight and endless begging to pull the crackers. There will just be him and me.

In many ways, I can barely believe this is happening. I'm so wedded to Christmas, to the whole joyful ritual of it, that the thought of being without my children would usually have emotionally poleaxed me. However this year, something has changed. It feels OK, fine even, to put myself first for once. This year it is me and my man, the newspapers, the TV, a log fire and lunch at the lovely local pub. And I can't wait.

Let's put this in perspective; for the past 19 years, ever since I had Raymond, I've spent every December making Christmas perfect for the children. I decorate the house, festoon the tree, cook the food. Every Christmas Eve we have drinks with the neighbours and then read *The Night*

Before Christmas. The children then go to bed and I put out their stockings way past midnight. Then they wake up early the next morning full of chatter and excitement at what Father Christmas gave them. It has always been a joyful time.

But all this changed when my marriage broke up four years ago. Since then, Christmas has made me feel panicked and sad. For the past three years, I have quaked in fear at the thought of my ex having the children for Christmas and, so far, he has been very understanding.

My happiness

would have been

unthinkable in the

dark days of divorce

However, this year, he feels it is his turn. And so I'll be having a child-free Christmas. Four years ago I couldn't have imagined this. During the dark days of divorce it didn't seem possible that I'd ever be happy

again, especially not over something as family-oriented as Christmas.

But now things have changed. I met my partner two years ago, and over dinner one day he suggested that we actually spend this Christmas together. Our only plan is to drink wine and laze around next to the log fire.

The children will be with my ex and his family, and we will speak in the morning and in the evening. I will wave them off on Christmas Eve – we will have our Christmas meal on that day and exchange

presents – and off they will go, and off I will go. The children seem fine about it. We have talked it through and the thought of getting a double Christmas is rather exciting to them and I feel the same.

Other divorced parents tell me they have been on the same journey. My friend Joanna says she found it excruciating when her children first went to their father's for Christmas. "There was a time when I thought I couldn't survive it." Now she feels quite different. "One year I stayed at friends and really enjoyed the freedom." Last year she worked in a soup kitchen and met another volunteer, who she is marrying next spring. "You never know what's round the corner," she says.

Another friend, Diana, thinks that

not having Christmas with her children has broadened her horizons. "Last year I went to Iceland and had Christmas in deep snow, the year before I went skiing on a singles holiday. I couldn't have

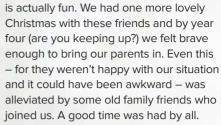
afforded to do that if I took the children."

For me and my children – and my boyfriend – it's a learning curve. Will I spend the days in floods of tears? Will they miss me so much they can't take one mouthful of Christmas dinner? I hope not.

In my mind this is a new chapter. It is unexpected and not what, ideally, I would have wanted, but this is where we are now.

And I, for one, am looking forward to waking up with my handsome, gorgeous boyfriend and snuggling down to enjoy our first proper Christmas together.

life today



Same again next year and then, year six, the old family friends couldn't come and we, ex-husband, children and me, were faced with Christmas with my parents, unalleviated by anybody else. We took a big breath, had a lovely relaxed day and that was it. We'd crossed some invisible bridge. After that we all took it for granted that we would be spending Christmas as a family again.

It helped that neither my ex-husband nor I have remarried so no new partners have stronger claims (though I think we could handle that). It also helped that we continued to mix it up. There was the odd stray boyfriend of our daughters'. There was a friend of the children whose mother had died and didn't want to come

until we persuaded her that we would be so relaxed we could spend the whole day in pyjamas.

And then we began mixing Christmas up with my husband's relatives. By this time he had a big flat in Edinburgh and

we took to driving to his sister and her husband in the Borders to spend a few days with them and their three children. Christmas Day we spend stuffing ourselves and drinking Champagne. We play a cracking game of Trivial Pursuit. On Boxing Day we walk along the River Tweed or climb the Eildon Hills. The day after that we go our separate ways.

And now there are grandchildren. Daughters start doing Christmas. And what is better than a baby in a paper crown sitting in a high chair eating its first bowl of turkey? Or a toddler finding a stocking full of presents? And of course now there are partners who have their own families and traditions. We can't count on being together in the same way for ever and that is perfectly fine.

Twenty five years have taught us to be flexible. Christmas shouldn't be a pressure and a focus for stress. It is an evolving ritual that marks the dance of time through a family. The joy is in the dancing. >>



'I still spend every Christmas with my former husband'



Lesley Garner, 70, lives in London. She spends Christmas with her ex-husband, Ken, daughters Harriet, 38, and Rachel, 36, and grandchildren

Dylan, three, and Rosa, one.

People are always surprised when I say that, in the 25 years that we've lived apart, my ex-husband and I still spend every Christmas together with our now grown-up children. This isn't a matter of polite endurance. We all look forward to it and enjoy it. How is this possible?

The first Christmas after we broke up, my husband took the children off skiing for Christmas and I, determined not to slump miserably at home, bought a plane ticket to Mexico and New York and had a very memorable time. Year one survived.

The following year we were invited by another family to spend Christmas with them and it was great. Lesson one and really, the only lesson you need, is this. Sharing your Christmas with others makes everyone behave better. It takes the attention off your own problems and



'We now have an empty nest but still pull out all the stops'



Louette Harding, 60, lives just outside Cambridge with her husband, Bob.

Once we had a child – not a baby; Holly was about

two when it started – we plunged into Christmas with fervour, my husband and I. None of our parents had been imaginative. A tree, a few strings of balding tinsel draped over the repro pictures, a sip of a Snowball – those were our memories. But now we would cast Christmas in a flurry of magical whimsy.

Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen had nothing on us for tacky winter wonderlands. We made stencils of boot prints and used them to sprinkle flour onto the carpets. We fashioned crêpe paper streamers in primary colours to cascade from the ceiling. We bit toothy chunks from the carrots left out for the reindeer. We bought jingle bells and, come rain, come snow, my husband stood under her bedroom window and softly shook them on Christmas Eve at bedtime. The legend went that if you weren't asleep before Santa arrived he

would pass over the house, so there was parental cunning behind this one.

But memory has sprinkled all this with a dusting of romance. I also remember the knot in my stomach in the push-me pull-you ritual of Christmas. Both his parents and mine demanded festive obeisance. The first year we were married my parents announced they were going on a cruise so his parents could take the first turn. We had been placed on a roster. His, mine, his, mine. Caught in the unavoidable traffic jam, you would glance out of the car window

and catch the eye of some other taut couple not spending Christmas quite as they wished. When our daughter was born, we had the perfect excuse to stay put – of course – and the parents – of course – morphed

seamlessly to spending Christmas, turn and turn about, with us.

Christmas simply wasn't Christmas without the excitement of a row brewing between my mother and my husband. I can't blame him. They always announced how long they were staying, and that was, without fail, for a period

that stretched a day beyond the limits of human tolerance.

Naturally, we vowed never to demand the same of our daughter and our son-in-law. We told them we understood if they did not wish to spend Christmas with us, though they were always welcome, and nor would we impose on them. So they feel they can ignore us at Christmas entirely - hooray! (Joking apart, I am pleased they don't feel they have to

restrain their plans for our sake.) They didn't come last year. They're not coming this year. In fact, they're going to New Zealand, so we won't even see them on Boxing Day. Our family Christmas will come courtesy of a snatched moment on FaceTime or photos on Facebook.

I would like to tailor our Christmas to our current status as a "sophisticated older couple without encumbrances". I might substitute the ubiquitous turkey. "Beef Wellington?" My husband says the words as if I suggested we roast a kitten. "What about going abroad?" "Leave the dog?" he whispers in shock.

So I don't have an easy way out. I'm not allowed to change the whole complexion of Christmas in order not to notice the missing beloved ones. My

My husband has

always made it

clear that I am

enough for him

husband is a creature of habit, as men often are. And he has always made it clear that I am enough for him, whereas part of my heart remains trained on our daughter. (Is this a key difference between men and women?)

So I will do "our" Christmas for him, as he plays the big kid – a role he is deft and sweet at. I'll pretend I'm as robustly joyous as he is, able to take in my stride the reduced cast of characters. As a wife and mother, this cheery act is my gift to them all. It's a present they're unaware of. And that's exactly how it should be. w&h

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I only popped in for baked beans

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The co-operative food

Here for you for life







Master perfumier ROJA DOVE tells Louette Harding why his childhood memories inspired him to create a specially fragranced Christmas candle

My mother adored

Christmas... father

couldn't abide it

oja, 59, is the creative force behind the ultra high-end brand Roja Parfums. "Christmas is incredibly special to me, a magical time and perhaps, like everyone else, I have a haunting sense that Christmases in the past were better. I grew up in an era when people didn't have everything they

wanted. There was a real feeling of Christmas being a time of treats. My mother, Eileen, adored Christmas. She had been born into a

very poor family and she used to tell us how her father would make a toy for each of them for Christmas. I suppose the contrast between daily hardship and the magic of Christmas morning stayed with her and she wanted to transfer that association to us. My

brother, Michael, and sister, Susan, certainly feel the same way as I do.

We lived on the south coast when I was a child. My father was a civil engineer. He was from a comfortably off family and, in contrast to my mother, he couldn't abide Christmas. Up until Christmas Eve there was nothing in our house: not a single card

> was put on display. About twice a year, my mother would bake a special cross between a bread and a cake, with cinnamon and nutmea. She would cook it in the

evening, so we'd go to bed with the scent of it warming the air. That was the first sign of Christmas. We didn't have central heating and while there were fireplaces in our bedrooms, my mother never lit them for safety's sake. Often there would be frost on the inside of the windows, and we

festive memoir

would peer through on Christmas Eve, convinced we could see Santa in the sky.

Then, after we had gone to sleep on Christmas Eve, my mother would dress the house – goodness knows how long it took her! There would be a real tree, which smelt of the forest, and of course dropped its needles later. She would sprinkle glitter down the stairs, which she said was where Santa's helpers had walked as they carried up the presents for the pillowcases hanging at the end of our beds. Naturally, we woke very early and opened some of the items before going back to sleep, acting the innocents, though with a few telltale pieces of chocolate scattered around us. Even something simple. such as a silver three-penny piece in the pudding, seemed wondrous. I don't suppose we ever ate fresh figs or dates back then but a box of dried Eat-Me Dates seemed incredibly exotic.

My mother was fun, vivacious, stylish and kind. She was so supportive to me. She believed you should never criticise anybody and her habitual line was, "Why not?" You'd say, "I want to be an astronaut." "Why not?" And then a while later, "But have you thought of ...?" So she also made you think about the consequences. Before she died, in 2009, I brought her up to London during the Christmas season, the first time she had left my father in years. I took her to The Ritz and The Savoy, to see The Nutcracker. She loved it. I think I have a photograph of her standing by every tree in every hotel we stopped by. Even today, Michael, Susan and I buy a very small Christmas tree and place it by her grave each Christmas. We're not being maudlin; we just want to say thank you.

A VERY SPECIAL PERFUMED CANDLE

"Fragrances are loved because of their ability to evoke happy memories," Roja explains. He's created the Essence of Christmas perfumed candle, using the finest oils to recreate his remembrance of Christmas: heliotrope, cinnamon, gingerbread, balsam fir, cedarwood and frankincense. £75, with a burn time of 45 hours, rojaparfums.com Roja Parfums Boutique opened in November in London's exclusive Burlington Arcade, W1J OQJ. w&h



Our year of change

From moving on after divorce to conquering back pain, three readers tell Alice Wilkinson how they overcame adversity and found a new zest for life

TURNING POINT AFTER DIVORCE

Clare McGrath, 46, is an office manager. She lives in Dorset with her two daughters, Millie, 15, and Clover, 12.

When my husband, John, told me he'd been seeing another woman for six months, I felt like I'd stepped out of my own life and into a soap opera. For the past few months, I'd noticed him coming home from work late at night and not answering his phone, but when I finally confronted him, I expected him to put it down to stress at work. After all, I'd always imagined an affair was something that happened to other people – not me.

I'd fallen for John when we were both working in TV production; we married two years later, bought a lovely home in Sussex and after we had Millie and Clover, I gave up work to become a full-time mum. We were just an ordinary family getting on with life until this bombshell nine years ago.

I felt betrayed and couldn't believe he'd kept this secret from me for so long. But the girls were only three and six at the time so I wanted to make things work for their sake. When John told me he wanted to be with the other woman, I was devastated. Coming to terms with it wasn't easy. My friends were a great support immediately after John left but everything reminded me of our life together.

"Starting a blog"

helped me get

over my divorce,

now I'm ready

to date again"

It took a very long time before

I began to feel happy and settled again, and even then the idea of dating or looking for someone seemed impossible. The girls were growing up

though and I didn't want to think I'd be on my own for ever.

A turning point came when I was reading a self-help book last Christmas that suggested acting positively will make you feel positive. I thought, "I've got to be my own spin doctor here."

I made it my New Year's resolution to set up a blog and dorsetdivorcee.com seemed like the perfect name. I'm quite tech savvy so I read articles online about creating a blog using WordPress. I've always loved writing, and since finishing my job in TV production, I'd been looking for a more creative output.

Finding a support network through my blog was such a nice surprise. I shared a post about loneliness and received lots of supportive responses from friends, as well as people I didn't know, who felt the same — it made me realise "I'm really not alone" and, finally, I feel at ease with being a "divorcee".

The support I've gained has made

me much more confident and I feel I'm ready to start dating again. Being an old romantic, I hope that my eyes will just lock with someone else's in the supermarket and that'll be it but I'm ready to give online dating a go first! dorsetdivorcee.com >>



RECOVERY FROM INJURY

Sylvia Tidy-Harris, 54, is married to Fred and lives in Leicestershire. She is the founder and managing director of womenspeakers.co.uk

I've always enjoying keeping fit and going to the gym a few times a week. Then, as I was stretching in a Pilates class one day, I felt a sharp twinge in my back. The next day, as I was rushing out of the house, I grabbed my handbag and felt the twinge again but this time, it was unbearably painful.

Explaining the pain that I was feeling to the doctor the next day, he prescribed painkillers and

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a muscle relaxant.
But during the day
I was still in agony.
Running a speaking
agency with my
husband is very full
on – I'm either sat at
my desk all day or
travelling to events. So

when it got to a point, six months later, where I dreaded business meetings because my back was causing me too much pain, I thought, "Something's got to change!"

I'd tried gentle swimming exercises to ease the pain and even bought a new mattress but it was slowly beginning to affect every area of my life – I could hear myself being

"I'm finally able to live life to the full after back pain stopped me in my tracks" unnecessarily snappy at friends and family, I'd had to stop my fitness regime and I felt constantly miserable.

In addition, I wasn't able to lift my granddaughter, Olivia, who is eight and affected by

cerebral palsy, which was heartbreaking.

After a friend told me about Dr Stefaan Vossen, a chiropractor who runs Core Health & Wellness in Warwick, I arranged an initial consultation. I couldn't believe it when he told me that I was carrying a stone-and-a-half more weight on my left side than my right because of torsion in my pelvis and shoulder. Listening to Stefaan explaining the exact route of the problem and talk confidently about how he could help, I realised I wouldn't have to put up with the pain forever and I felt a huge sense of relief. Beginning with two sessions a

week, I noticed a difference straight away. Now, I go once a month, leaving home at 5.15am to arrive at Stefaan's beautifully styled clinic in the middle of the Warwickshire countryside before work. I immediately relax because

I know I'll be leaving there totally free of all the pressure and

pain in my back. Jumping into a lake in Tennessee while on holiday last month, I felt like my old self again - I have regained my confidence and got my daring streak back! This year. Fred and I are planning to resume our fitness regime - it will be lovely to spend some time together outside of the office - and my friend Sheila and I can get back to giggling like little girls when we can't do something in our Pilates class! And, when Olivia visits, I can give her all

the attention I want to, without any discomfort.



REDUNDANCY LED TO A NEW CAREER

Lara Heppell, 41, is married and lives in Leeds with her husband Hugo and their four-year-old son Gabriel. She's a self-employed yoga teacher specialising in women's health.

When I left my job as a project manager to start my maternity leave, I never dreamt I wouldn't go back. Having worked there for ten years — beginning in telesales and working my way up — it was a huge shock when, a month into my maternity leave,

I received a group email announcing

the redundancy of my whole department.

was a shock

but it proved to

be a blessing

in disguise"

Overwhelmed by the news and with my first child due in ten weeks' time, I couldn't think beyond delivering the baby safely – there was so much uncertainty. Although I'd been offered a decent redundancy package, I knew the pot wouldn't last forever, especially with a new baby on the way.

fresh starts

Luckily, Hugo was really supportive, reassuring me that we could manage, dealing with the paperwork and delaying my redundancy meetings until after the baby had been born. His income as head of investments at a regional screen agency in Leeds is good, but I started shopping at less expensive places for clothes.

I'd always imagined that I'd return to project managing part-time after having the baby. But having space to think about my next steps, after my son was born, I realised that, while I enjoyed my job – the team spirit and the satisfaction of a successful project launch – it was very high pressure, required long hours and frequent travelling, and it would have been difficult to be there for my son as he was growing up.

I'd started yoga when I was in my twenties to escape the day-to-day stresses of the office, and I'd been teaching a few classes in the local village hall as a hobby. So, when Lindsay, another yoga teacher, called me out of the blue nine months after my redundancy to ask if I wanted to teach some classes at the yoga centre she was opening down the road from my house, I thought, "This is meant to be!"

Agonising over whether I could make a success of being a yoga instructor and what we'd do for money, Hugo encouraged me to take a risk — we could cut back to manage on his earnings for a while. The change in lifestyle took some getting used to — I stopped buying coffees in cafés for example — but I soon stopped

worrying about money and began appreciating the time I had and doing something so fulfilling.

Now, business is doing really well. I teach one-to-one sessions at my home and group classes elsewhere. My website all-woman.co.uk launches this month. This year, I'm going to move my tutorials

online so that I can access more people at a time that's convenient for me, and without classes I can put my little boy to bed and spend my evenings with my husband. My income has halved but I've learned that having more time and balance in life is more important than money – I now see my redundancy as a blessing in disguise. w&h

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Alexandra Potter knows how it feels but, as her story shows, love doesn't have an age limit...



he sun was setting over the lake and I was sitting on a rooftop in Udaipur, India, having my palm read. It was 2012 and I was single and 41. I nodded disbelievingly. No doubt this was something he said to every woman.

But the fortune teller was insistent. "You are going to fall in love with a man you have known for ten or 15 years," he continued gravely. "After that the marriage will happen very quickly." I wracked my brains, but no one came

to mind and, thanking him, I handed over a few rupees. "When it happens you must come back and tell me," he laughed, waving me goodbye.

Ever the sceptic, I dismissed his claims. By this point I'd given up on ever finding "The One" and getting married. I'd been dating for 25 years. None of my relationships had worked out. Perhaps it was never going to happen for me.

But the fortune teller was right.
Because in less than a year I was engaged to Aaron, a friend who I had known for 15 years, and we were married last summer.

We first met at a party at my sister's home in Los Angeles, where she lives and works. It was the mid-90s and we were both in our twenties. I was on holiday from London, where I worked as a writer on a magazine; he was a tall, suntanned Californian with a perfect smile who worked in film production. It had all the basics of being one of those gr

basics of being one of those great loveat-first-sight stories... except it wasn't like that at all. I vaguely remember saying hello. He says we swapped polite pleasantries but neither of us made much of an impression on each other. The following years saw me achieving my dream of having my first novel published, getting engaged to my boyfriend in London and turning 30. Meanwhile, Aaron was dating up a storm in LA and travelling the world. From time to time I would hear of his globetrotting through my sister, who remained good friends with him as they worked together.

In 2003, I broke off my engagement; we'd simply grown apart and, wanting a fresh start, I moved to LA to write a new novel. But although I was now living in the same city as Aaron, we moved in different circles. On the rare occasions we bumped into each other, we would chat a little before saying our

goodbyes, our lives crossing briefly only to cross back again.

The years rolled by. By now we were both in our late thirties and in relationships. A lot of my friends were getting married and having babies, and it seemed we would follow the same path

with our respective partners. But then suddenly we were both single again. It would have seemed the ideal time for us to get together and my sister tried to matchmake, but we would laugh off her attempts to get us together. We >>

"After dating for 25 years, I thought marriage would never happen" Then something happened that sent my world crashing. My father, a keen cyclist and hiker, suffered a catastrophic stroke and died just two weeks later. The shock and grief was overwhelming. We are a small, close-knit family and it was always just the four of us — Mum and Dad and my sister and me. Now he was gone, we were utterly heartbroken.

The rest of the year passed in a blur as we tried to rebuild our lives, but my father's death had profoundly affected me. Faced literally with life and death, it's like a light shines in with laser focus and you see what's important: love. Real, true love, where you'd do anything for that person. Where you never, ever want to let them go. That's it. None of the other stuff matters.

Moreover, I realised life is short. You don't have forever. My parents were together for over 50 years and it wasn't long enough. I vowed then I wasn't going to waste time on a love that was anything less.

A year later I travelled to India to research a new book, but the journey was also a personal one, as it marked the first anniversary of my father's death. On my return I received an email. I had moved back to London and it was from Aaron telling me of his plans to visit for the Olympics in July.

We arranged to meet for a drink and over the next few months our emails became more frequent. Soon we were sharing funny anecdotes and genuine feelings. I've always found it easier to express myself in words, and now there was a new honesty between us. I'd always known Aaron to be a joker, but when he wrote to me he revealed a thoughtful, more sensitive side. It was a particularly rainy summer in England and he'd send me songs to "bring me a bit of California sunshine". It was through those emails that we really got to know each other and I realised that although we were different in lots of ways, we shared the same important values in life.



We met up the night before the opening ceremony. It was a warm summer's evening and the whole city was in a celebratory mood. I was a little late and

as I walked into the pub he turned and smiled at me, with that big California smile of his, and it was like the flicking of a switch. Something had changed. Or was it me that had changed? Instead of seeing the friend I'd known for over 15 years,

I saw this gorgeous, funny, kind man and thought to myself, "What have I been doing all this time?"

That evening, when he leaned in to kiss me goodnight, we finally got together. Six months later he proposed.

Our wedding last July was in the Yorkshire Dales – where I originally come from – in a barn attached to a 500-year-old pub. It was small, intimate and very casual. We made our own invitations and, with the help of family and friends, decorated the barn ourselves. We strung carnival lights from the wooden beams and a local florist supplied jam jars filled with peonies and wild flowers.

When it came to finding a dress, I was very lucky. A friend put me in

touch with a wonderful lady who used to make couture wedding dresses and still had a few samples left over that she sold to friends. I wasn't sure what to expect. Being a first-time bride at 44, I didn't want anything too fussy or traditional, but the first one I tried on I fell instantly in love with.

On the day I woke to rain, but nothing could spoil my happiness. I was marrying a man I'd spent my whole life looking for. We said our vows by candlelight, and afterwards, when we went outside, we found the clouds had parted and the sun was shining. It was nothing short of wonderful.

We honeymooned in Provence where we spent a few gloriously sunny days driving through lavender fields, drinking endless glasses of rosé and looking at our rings, saying, "We did it!" over and over, grinning like loons.

Our first Christmas together was spent in California with Aaron's family and my mum, who flew out to join us, before travelling to Mexico for the

"It took a long

time to find

'The One' but

it was worth

the wait"

New Year. This year we'll be heading back to California again. We both live in London now, but we're lucky to have jobs that allow us to travel, and we love spending our winters in the sunshine.

We sometimes joke that we got married because we were the

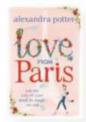
only single people left, but deep down we feel so lucky to have found each other. It took a long time but it was worth the wait and it has given hope to my single friends in their forties that it can still happen.

Love doesn't have an age limit. To quote one of my favourite writers, Jane Austen, "Do not be in a hurry, the right man will come at last."

Every time Aaron smiles at me, I think, "Yes, he certainly did."

I must go back to India and tell that fortune teller.

Love From Paris (Hodder) by Alexandra Potter is out now w&h



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a lesbian later in life because of disillusionment with men, but believe me, I tried to stay heterosexual. My sexuality has nothing to do with men and everything to do with being able to form an intimate relationship and connection

with someone, and that happens to be with women.

Looking back, I was probably a lesbian when I first started seeing boys but didn't realise it. I didn't like

them touching me but I solved the problem by going out with a 16-year-old for four years who never even kissed me! My real passion was for my PE teacher. I didn't have sexual fantasies but I had daydreams of her stopping her car and giving me a lift because she thought I was special.

boys, I thought I'd keep experimenting until I found the right one. I had two longer relationships with men but it wasn't until my late twenties that I started living with a man I'll call Paul.

I think maybe it was because I'd never

met a lesbian, or been told that there was an alternative way of being, that I didn't realise I was attracted to women. It may sound like a cliché but a key moment in my sexual awareness

was seeing kd lang on TV. There weren't any famous gay women at this time. She was a trailblazer and there had been a huge media furore when she came out. I became obsessed with the song *Constant* Craving from her recently released album, Ingénue, and I thought she was gorgeous.

my feelings. I thought perhaps I was bisexual and even told Paul but described it as a bit of hero worship that

wasn't anything to worry about.

Five years later, my mum was diagnosed with terminal cancer and I thought we should get married because it would please her. Like many people of her generation, she strongly disapproved of same-sex relationships. So in August of that year, when I was 32, Paul and I got married. I also enrolled in a science degree at the University of York. Tragically, two months later, my mother died.

It was an emotional time but my mother's death gave me the freedom to be

I began to resent

Paul lying next to

me and wanting

physical contact

myself. The other important factor was that at university I suddenly had access to the internet, which was relatively new in those days. I was able to talk to other women and explore my sexuality through forums.

Soon, I began to resent Paul lying in bed next to me and wanting physical contact. I didn't want what he was offering – and I realised it had been like that with all the men. No matter how good a lover they were, I just switched off. Now sex with a man didn't just feel wrong, it felt horrible.

The first time I had sex with a woman I was 34. Gina was a married woman from Texas who I'd met through an online forum. We were platonic to start with and then Gina's messages became sexually laden. She flew over to England and we went on a road trip to Scotland; I obviously kept this hidden from Paul. When I met her at the airport, she was quite brazen. She started touching me and that night in bed I had a revelation. It was like, "This is what it's about, this feels normal."

When Gina went back to Texas, I told Paul we couldn't go on. We'd been together for seven years at that point. I knew it was unfair on him but I'd set out on a path and I couldn't go back. I think he thought I'd change my mind, but

For Lois, having

normal and she

never questions it

two mums is

I didn't although it was still a very confusing time and in addition my dad had become seriously ill.

I didn't want to take up Gina's invitation to visit her in Texas but the experience

did embolden me to connect with other lesbians in my area through a local forum.

It was some time later at a women-only dance that I met Sara. I just had that gut feeling: this person is important, somehow. When we talked she had

edge, but she wasn't cocky. She had a dog, I had a dog; she liked music, so did I. Her parents had been in the armed forces, just like mine. She was more experienced than me – she came out when she was 19 whereas it took me until I was 38 – but it didn't make any difference.

The only problem was that she'd been thinking of getting back with her ex. I wasn't baggage-free either, since I was still officially married although I wasn't

Tales of two marriages



➤ Queen Of Shops Mary Portas, 55, divorced Graham Portas, father of her two children, in 2003. She met journalist Melanie Rickey in 2004 and the couple

converted their civil partnership into a marriage in 2014. They now have a two-year-old son, Horatio, together. "Have I loved men? Yes. Have I loved more than one woman? No. But did I know that I'd had crushes on men and women in the past? Yes."

➤ Former Sex and the City actress Cynthia Nixon, 49, ended her 15-year marriage to Danny Mozes in 2003. She then started dating activist Christine Marinoni, whom she married

......

in 2012. "I've been straight and I've been gay, and gay is better," she explains. Cynthia has two sons with her husband, and one with her wife.

.....

- ➤ Psychotherapist and author **Susie Orbach**, 69, ended her marriage to the father of her two children, Joseph Schwartz, before beginning a relationship with novelist Jeanette Winterson, whom she married in 2015.
- ➤ Actress **Saffron Burrows**, 43, was engaged to actor Alan Cumming before she married long-term girlfriend Alison Balian. The couple now have a son together. "To come out would actually be an untruth because the men I've loved were very vivid, real, loving relationships."

living with Paul. Fortunately Sara chose me and we moved in together in 2001.

Four years later we moved to Leicester

so I could do a PhD, and in 2009 we started the process of adoption. I thought we had everything against us because not only were we lesbians, but also I was 44 and Sara was 46.

Yet Leicester City Council never made us feel different from any other couple. Lois [not her real name] was nearly four when she came to live with us. She's eight now.

For Lois, having two mums is normal and she never questions it. There have

been no issues with other parents either. Maybe it's because we don't look like archetypal lesbians so we don't challenge people. Sara and I don't have butch personas. We're educated, we're conventional, we don't make big public displays of affection.

Sara met my dad before he died in 2000. I don't know if he knew what our relationship was about as he was very ill. My ex-husband and I have gone our own ways now. Though it must have been upsetting, I believe he's met someone new.

Sara and I have been together for 15 years now and we plan to get married in 2017. We want to make sure everything is legally in place for Lois, should the

worst happen.

Recently, I met up with an old friend who is now living in Geneva. When I came out to her she was shocked and said, "Oh, we clon't have those sorts in Geneva." But you have to respect people's beliefs. I'm not here to make people confront their issues, I'm here to live my life. Although if I can help another woman realise that she's not alone, then I'm very happy to do that. w&h



woman&home & BRAND NEW ATTITUDE 69



SARNIE

WITH A LITTLE

je ne sais quoi.

Introduce a bit of French flair to your snacks. With its mild, creamy taste and oozing texture, President Brie makes any sandwich superbe.





Do you feel bereft when your favourite series draws to a close? Anna Maxted recognises the symptoms

Without my

weekly fix I feel

lost and tense

he pleasure of being reliably swept away every Sunday night by Downton Abbey was a highlight of my week – as delightful as expertly made cheesecake; as comforting as a soak in a sweetly scented bath; on a par with losing myself in a compelling novel. I know the Christmas special is still to come, but in every sense it felt like the end of an era.

Just like Poirot and Poldark, my other

favourites, these period dramas transport me to a place where almost everyone's problems are worse than mine. Such a relief! My own worries – my teen's screen-time

obsession, the damp patch spreading up our basement wall, the suspicion that certain family members have nits — can be banished for one louche, luxurious hour. Watching other people, many in fabulous hats, wrestle with their passions and predicaments, lose vast fortunes and fall out with their entire family — is more relaxing than mindfulness, massage and Pilates combined. No wonder I and millions become addicted.

As I admire, despise or root for my dashing heroes and boo-hiss villains, I start to feel I know and understand them. I found myself giving more thought than is healthy to Lady Mary's various sex-related

dilemmas. What do you do, when the Turkish diplomat you are illicitly entertaining in your boudoir unfortunately croaks?

Once these characters have infiltrated our daytime thoughts, it's hard not to become obsessed. And just like the sadness you feel reaching the end of a wonderful book, I actually think I'm going to miss these fictional characters! Gripped by *Poldark* (I wish) as I stand over the

washing up, I feel a visceral urge to shake Ross's pathetic, whinging cousin Francis. And my pursed-lipped pity for his wife Elizabeth (married a twit... must be kicking

herself... should have waited...) pleasantly whiles away a long commute.

Costume dramas, set in great houses, are particularly blissful because, frankly, our fascination with extreme wealth and privilege is part underpinned by envy. Watching poor Elizabeth trapped in her manor house (on the edge of bankruptcy) entertainingly reminds us that a magnificent home stuffed with heirlooms is no guarantee of contentment.

The high and mighty struggle with grief, worries, petty irritations, same as the rest of us (I put myself in the below stairs category). They have as far to fall and, ultimately, the decent ones

share similar values. In *Downton*, when there's a fire, Lord Grantham shouts, "And save the dog!"

In a thousand tiny ways, these sweeping sagas gently resolve our worries, without one person wagging a finger in our face. No wonder that my mother, along with millions, loved *The Thorn Birds*, and my husband was enchanted by *Brideshead Revisited*.

I love modern dramas like *Breaking Bad*, but they emotionally exhaust me. The likes of *The Great British Bake Off* and *Strictly Come Dancing* are compelling, but somehow, your feet remain on the ground – no magic carpet takes off.

Whereas a period drama deftly touches on tragedy, without draining you dry. Mrs Patmore's grief for her soldier nephew, shot in the war for cowardice, was subtle but powerful – imagine all those mothers. It puts our worries in perspective.

A period drama presents a cosy, sentimental interpretation of the past, where good and evil are clearly defined, and the good guys, or thereabouts, usually win. It's the perfect way to unwind. Without my weekly fix of feathers, finery, trouble at t'mill, cads, scoundrels and "ay dare say", I feel lost and tense.

Still, next year Ross and Demelza – all flowing hair, frilly shirts and sexual tension – will once again gallop across the Cornish moors into our eager hearts!

Downton Abbey Christmas Special is on ITV on Christmas Day. w&h



"Gogglebox has put the fun back into our relationship"

Gogglebox stars Steph and Dom Parker talk to Nathalie Whittle about their marriage secrets and how they make Christmas special





inside a marriage

I was 32 and I didn't want to waste time, so within a few weeks of dating, I said to Dom, "If, in a year's time, we don't want to get married, I'm out." In just four months, I went from having a life in Brussels to being with Dom in England – I sold my house, left my job, packed everything up in the car, took my cat and that was that.

When our one-year anniversary approached, I kept thinking, "What happens if he doesn't want to marry me?" We were in Naples visiting friends and we took the ferry to Capri, had this beautiful lunch and bought sunglasses together in a trendy little shop. I felt confident a proposal was next. Then... nothing. It wasn't until the following evening when we were in this hideous nightclub that he velled, "Will you marry me?" I said, "Is that it?" and just pointed to the floor as if to say, "Get down!" Of course, then it was, "Absolutely yes!" He later explained that he was going to ask me on the ferry the previous day, but I'd fallen asleep.

We had the wedding in the grounds of a house we renovated in Kent – and, quite frankly, it was a military operation. We'd even designed the gardens to fit the marquee in. I wore a simple corset dress,

"We were in a

hideous nightclub

in Italy when

Dom asked me

to marry him"

with raised flowers on it, by Christiana Couture, and a translucent cape with a big collar on top. Dom had the most beautiful Favourbrook morning coat in red and gold velvet, with a matching waistcoat

and silk trousers. The funny thing is, I was trying so hard to keep up with everything that was going on that I was sober all day!

When we bought our B&B, The Salutation, in 2003, the children were very young and our plan was simply to live in it or sell it on; we didn't have any intention of making a business out of it. I'm glad we did though because it has really improved our relationship. We're quite an insular couple, so the social side of it has been great.

Dom is incredibly romantic – I've been given an eternity ring around a teddy bear's neck at Christmas – but as >>

In the event of a fire, he'd save... The dog. Their bond verges on the weird.

Dom's secret skill is... He is a great carpenter. He can make tables, beds, cupboards... the list is endless!

His desert island essential would be...

A book or a Kindle – he's read everything from Hitler's Mein Kampf to the Bible. **His most annoying habit is...** Sniffing – all the time! It drives me mad.

Worst Christmas present he's bought you? A Laura Ashley velvet bolero jacket. It was the first time he dared buy me clothing and he thought he'd nailed it.

Top of Dom's Christmas list is... A holiday. Failing that, some time on our own.

STEPH SAYS...

I still remember the outfit Dom was wearing when we met for the first time almost 30 years ago – a blue checked shirt, moleskin trousers and brogues.

I thought he was absolutely gorgeous. He was running a property rental

company at the time and I wanted the top floor of this huge mansion he was marketing; I was pursuing a career in NATO and very aspirational! Back then, I had no idea my feelings were reciprocal, so I

simply shut myself off to the idea of Dom and me ever being together.

It was ten years before we met again, by which time I was living in Brussels, working for the European Commission. I was in the UK on business and a mutual friend had set me up on a blind date. We clicked instantly; everything just seemed to work – visually, emotionally, our backgrounds. It wasn't until about three hours into the date that I had the Eureka moment. In the middle of this busy restaurant in Chiswick I yelled, "Oh my God – it's you!"





you get older, those gestures aren't needed as much for an affirmation of where you are in your relationship. Often, it's the quietest little thing, such as being brought a cup of coffee, that has an impact now. About five years ago, I had two major spinal disc surgeries and he was incredible. He'd time the buzzer for my morphine kit and was there with all my medication at strange times in the morning.

When we started doing Gogglebox two years ago, it gave us the opportunity to sit and be quiet and not have the world interrupt us, which has been lovely. It's brought the fun back into our relationship too. We've gone back to making each other laugh and the silliness we'd forgotten about because we were too busy being "grown-ups".

On a night off, you'll actually find us in front of the television in our pyjamas! I love all the American shows like Scandal and Grey's Anatomy, while for Dom, it's all about Midsomer Murders and Poirot. Then when the children are home, we put on a movie and have roast chicken!

We keep the B&B open at Christmas, but we have enough staff to manage, so we can have our own Christmas dinner in our house next door. It's absolute pandemonium! Once we've got through as many presents as we can first thing, it's "Everybody get ready! People are arriving in half an hour!" One thing I don't like is having people I know spend Christmas Day on their own, so lunch gets bigger every year. There's always some disaster one year, Dom bought a turkey in a bag and put it in the fan oven. The bag melted and we had to cut away a third of the turkey!

If there's a secret to a long-lasting relationship, I'd have to say it's honesty. Dom and I would never lie to each other about anything, no matter how awful it is. Yes, there have been some horrid moments as a result and, of course, we argue (he locked me in the garden once!), but you get past those. That's the glue that holds us together.

DOM SAYS...

The first time I saw Steph, I was blown away by her. I made it clear I was interested, but I got the cold shoulder. When we met again years later, I knew she was the one. We courted for several months and while it was fun jetting back and forth to Brussels, I wanted more. So I said, "Why don't you guit your job and live with me?" I asked her to tell her workplace that she was going to England to get married. It wasn't a proposal, but it was my subconscious saying, "Let's not mess around with this, we both know where it's going."

Like so many parents our age, we lead such busy lives, so filming Gogglebox has become our date night. It's the one night we just have to enjoy each other's company. We love to make each other laugh and we're also best friends.

When it comes to the children, I'm bad cop and Steph's good cop. I'll say, "If you do that, you're not getting any pocket money," or if they ask for a new iPad cover, I'll tell them to go and get a job! Steph's not wishy-washy, but she's more understanding than I am. She's a wonderful mother.

I'll never forget our first Christmas together when it was just the two of us. We cooked this enormous dinner, but we

had so many Bloody Marys that by the time we sat down at the table, we couldn't be bothered to eat. We just left it there!

Steph & Dom's Guide to Life (Coronet) is out now w&h







WHAT CATS EAT ISN'T ALWAYS WHAT CATS NEED



Cats need something healthy.

IAMS contains only the high quality nutrition they need to support a strong immune system and help maintain a shiny coat.







Expertise from beginning to end.



Howdens Joinery is the UK's largest manufacturer and supplier of fitted kitchens, appliances and joinery products.

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how you wear it



UPGRADE: SHADES OF GREY

Deborah Todd, 39, lives in Manchester and is the founder of British sportswear brand zaazee.co.uk. Like many of us, she lives in black!

We know you'll never wear colour or print... but by shifting several shades and layering up grey, you'll stay in your comfort zone but will still be challenging yourself with lighter tones.

Coat, £75, 10-18, Wallis. Waistcoat, £55, 6-14, Kiomi at zalando.co.uk. Dress, £42, xs-l, Oasis. Tights, £30, Falke. Boots, £325, Russell & Bromley. Earrings, £210, Carat London. Watch, £195, Calvin Klein. Bangle, £90, Otis Jaxon at Etsy. Band rings, £14-£24.75 each, Curious Owl at Etsy. Gem ring, £45, Lola Rose





YOUR SHAPE YOUR WAY

Tricky trend SEQUINS Work those sequins 24/7 this party season and follow our fashion-forward tips and tricks to suit your shape...



Droplet sequins bounce off the body so will make a pencil skirt seem not so figure-hugging Blouse, £129, 8-16, The White Company. Skirt, £99, 8-18, Mint Velvet. Clutch, £18, Pretty Little Thing.

PARTY SHAPEWEAR

From strapless to backless and briefs that suck you in, make sure you get your underwear under full control



When it comes to backless dresses, adhesive bras are your style saviours. Make sure the cup fits fully and feels comfortable.



£28, A-D, InvisiBra



STRAPLESS Opt for a bra with sturdy underwiring to keep you in place.

Bigger busts benefit

from a half corset.



£49, 32-36 A-E. Chantelle

£39, 32-36 A-D. Passionata

£35, 32-38

A-FF, Ultimo



It's all about feeling secure - maintain that ideal shape by tightening those straps to get a bit more lift.





Dress, £80, 6-16, Topshop

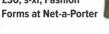


£29.50, 34-40 A-D. Marks & Spencer









£70, s-xl,

HIPS

Slim down those thighs with a miracle-making minimiser, and make your legs look longer than ever.





TUMMY

Dress, £100,

8-18, Coast

Create the ultimate hourglass figure and tame your tummy with these waist-cinching wonders.









BUM

Lift and sculpt your derrière to perfection and give Kim Kardashian a run for her money.



£28, 8-18, Simone Pérèle

£37. s-xl. Miraclesuit



£26, 12-22, Magisculpt at Marisota w&h

The best sparkly tops

Get the party started with shimmer, sequins and shine





ay all your Christmases be white! Isn't that everyone's dream? Well, we obviously can't guarantee snow, but we can guarantee that you'll love the new festive collection at The White Company! It's full of exciting new ideas to help make Christmas a pleasure. From fabulous decorations for your

home to chic dining table ideas, from simply gorgeous gifts to most wantable fashion buys... there's so much to inspire and help make your celebrations magical.

For a limited time, woman&home readers can enjoy a special **20% off plus free delivery**, when buying in-store, by phone or online! Offer ends 23 December 2015.

- HOW TO REDEEM IN-STORE Fill in the voucher below and take to a store. To find your nearest store, visit thewhitecompany.com/stores
- HOW TO REDEEM BY PHONE Call 020 3758 9222 and quote code AH612.
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TERMS AND	CONDITIONS *For full terms and conditions	s please see thewhitecompany.com/help/terms. Off	er is valid on full-priced items only. Offer expires on 23 December 2015.	CODE: AH612

Framboise Noire

= HEART OF DARKNESS =



SHAY & BLUE







NEW IN MY MAKE-UP

BAG If, like me, you usually just grab foundation and go... Elizabeth Arden Flawless Start Instant Perfecting Primer, £28, might slow you down a second but everything now looks way better.

Flawless Start Instant Perfecting Primer



What's new

Beauty director Jo Glanville-Blackburn tracks down her favourite beauty buys of the moment



SHE'S GLOWING!

Super skin meister Dr Harold Lancer. known for his lengendary "Lancer Glow", is the celebs' favourite doc, loved by Beyoncé, Scarlett Johansson and Kim Kardashian, More of a laser man, now we can all get a bit more radiant without going Stateside, just by mixing his new Lancer Dani Glowing Skin Perfector. £85, under or into your foundation. Yes. I'm an addict!

QUICK SHAPE UP

The modern way to make eyes look sexier is to brush the outer half of your lashes right out to the corners. Emphasise with a little shadow or kohl at the edges too.



"Skin is everything: past 40 you need to look after the beauty before the creativity"

Sharon Dowsett

JUST LOVE IT!

She's done it again!
Make-up genie
Charlotte Tilbury
has created her Mini
Miracle Eye Wand,
£29, a double-ended
under-eye heroine that
wipes out tiredness.
Check out Charlotte's
new Covent Garden
store when you're
next in the area.



MINIMAL MAKE-UP

Possibly the tiniest, most potent pot of powder cream is this MAC Into the Well Eye Shadow in Beg For It, £16, that works well as a finger smudge of shadow to a fine brush line.







ONE MORE THING Masks are

your ultimate skin boost, so imagine making the experience even better. Origins Maskimizer Skin Optimising Mask Primer, £18.50, makes the surface softer and prepped to play. Try it under Exuviance Bionic Oxygen Facial, £60; Masque Bar Luminizing Charcoal Peel Off Mask, £9.99 for 3, or Origins Plantscription Powerful Lifting Overnight Mask, £52.

MOST WANTED It's gold, it's vibrant, and can be worn almost anywhere (eye, lips, cheeks apparently): this could be the most long-awaited make-up ever! Pat McGrath Gold 001, £26, from the make-up artist who's conceived almost every iconic designer look for the past 25 years – yes, she's British and we're proud.

n our manic calendar of life, to underestimate the value big bath standing in the corn the room, stepping into the instead – but where's the indulgence, the pa of our body AND, more importe mind? Sure it takes longer – but

If in doubt, you'll find Jo GB in the tub! Here are her favourite ways to scrub, soak, smooth and sculpt your body with the best bathing beauty rituals...

n our manic calendar of life, it's easy to underestimate the value of that big bath standing in the corner of the room, stepping into the shower instead - but where's the luxury? Where's the indulgence, the pampering of our body AND, more importantly, our mind? Sure it takes longer – but perhaps your body is telling you something? That you NEED longer. And as every muscle in the warmth softens - at once - in a way that nothing else can achieve, take this moment in your Christmas chaos to calm, to consider, to reflect and to feel positive for the year ahead. And, above all, to come out gleaming and smelling sensational!

at-home pampering

Stimulate your senses

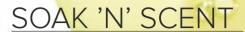
Plant-based aromatic oils help bespoke an aroma on your skin. Take a more holistic and customisable approach with aromatherapy layering.

+ "Start with an indulgent sugar-oil scrub," says international skin expert Nathalie Eleni. "Then apply serums and creams." Try *Ila Body Scrub For A Blissful Experience*, £63, with rose otto, jasmine, sandalwood and patchouli. "Apply to damp skin from the ankles upwards, working in circular movements." + Next, step into an essential oil-infused bath for 20 minutes, to allow the blend

to envelop your senses. I have just rediscovered *Olverum Bath Oil*, £23.50, with eucalyptus, rosemary and Siberian fir needle.

→ Finish with a layer of aromatic body oil, such as Temple Spa It's All Good Nutritious Skin Oil, £37, or Aveda Stress Fix-Composition Oil, £23, with layender and clary sage.

+ Seal and massage all over with a nourishing cream or balm, such as Origins Comfort Mood Ultra-Rich Vanilla Body Butter, £30, a "melt in the palms" body butter.



Unleash your inner self with my pick of the most delicious mood-enhancing scented baths.

+ In need of something sweet? First up and quite delicious is Viktor & Rolf Bonbon Perfumed Foaming Bath, £45, which is very true to the fragrance,

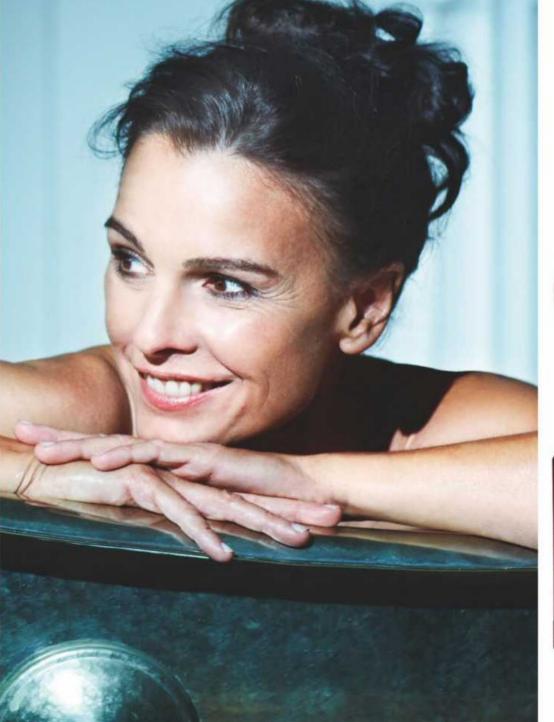
£45, which is very true to the fragrance so aficionados won't be disappointed in the aroma. Makes a darling gift too.

+ Need to get your act together or is your schedule a bit off? Aromatherapy Associates Clear Mind Bath And Shower Oil, £48, exclusive to Liberty, combines chamomile and lavender to de-stress, while frankincense and bergamot revive and focus the mind. Love this!

+ Feeling festive? Good enough to eat, try the aromatic delights of the all-in-one *Philosophy Christmas Cookie Shampoo*, *Shower Gel & Bubble Bath*, £14.

+ Winding down? Step into a roseand-lavender-scented soak of *Humble Bath Honey, £12* at Waitrose, with deep skin scents of musk, amber and frankincense. *Hermès Eau d'Orange Verte Hair and Body Shower Gel, £34*,

is the perfect invigorating wash when







TAN AND TONE

Layer up for a 360-degree glow - and a confidence boost too! + Start with a good body scrub and then, for three consecutive days, use gradual tanner, such as Clarins Radiance-Plus Golden Glow Booster for Body, £26, mixed in your daily body cream, for a more guaranteed perfect and controllable colour. + Conceal any blemishes, bruises or broken capillaries with a nontransferable foundation concealer such as the iconic MAC Studio Face And Body Foundation, £22, which is used backstage and on every model body photographic shoot I've ever been on. + Then to emphasise your décolletage,

collarbone and tops of shoulders,

dust over a bronzer such as Vita Liberata Trysal Minerals, £35, which will also top up your tan for you throughout the day. → Finish with a spritz of Sienna X Shimmer Spray Instant Glamour & Glow, £4.95, along the edge of your collarbone, the entire length of your upper arms, then downwards from your throat to your cleavage. Partner up with a highlight on the "C" around each cheekbone. + Just getting the legs out? Legology Sun-Lite Sheer Lingerie For Legs, £36, is a fabulously cool, aerated gel cream that's also a wash-off tan and gives a hint of shimmer to shins.



More fragrant past midnight!

Tricks to ensure your perfume lasts:

→ Spray perfume onto damp skin straight after a shower, before getting dressed. The moisture will help lock in the scent.

→ Rub a balm on pulse points before spraying on scent. The occlusive balm will retain the perfume on your skin longer – this is perfect for drier skin.

→ Perfume your hair, but rather than using an alcohol-based fragrance directly onto hair – which will dry it out – spray a little onto your hairbrush before running it through your hair. The latest addition to the Jo Malone Cologne Intense collection is Orris & Sandalwood Cologne, £105 for

100ml, a rather beautiful blend of powdery iris with a unisex aroma that evolves into its warm, woody soul. It layers beautifully with Jo Malone Blackberry & Bay Cologne, £85 for 100ml.

And here's our pick of golden scents:

Michael Kors 24k Brilliant Gold, £39 for 30ml EDP; DKNY Fall Limited Edition, £41 for 100ml EDT, or a touch of pure gold with Dior J'adore Touche de Parfum, £70 for 20ml, a new oil version on this

classic fragrance, with a

uniquely decadent dropper.



FASTEST WAY TO SEXY SKIN?

skin to look and feel a million dollars?

+ "You need to exfoliate," says Fiona,
"but it's important to use something
that's going to invigorate your senses
too." I adore Decléor 1000 Grain Body
Exfoliator, £25, enriched with grapefruit
essential oil. Apply before showering
and massage to scrub and soften skin
until it turns into an oil for the best
results; or reach for the ever fabulous
ESPA Invigorating Salt Scrub, £36.

The easiest and quickest way to get

one of my all-time favourites.

Layer up. "Stick to similar scent groups with each product you apply on your body, such as uplifting citrus, lemon, lime and neroli; relaxing lavender, chamomile and jasmine; or seductive rose, ylang-ylang and sandalwood," says Nathalie. "However, because these natural blends are much lighter than perfumes, it's hard to go wrong, as long as you stick to more natural spa brands." w&h





Tell us your beauty needs... and we'll tell you the best products out there for you



POWDER

The game-changing new beauty site

Meet your match in seconds at thisispowder.co.uk





Lip Colour Balm,

£17. To add shape

to thin lips, outline

the corners and the

bow in a slightly

deeper tone.

HYDRATANT

LUMINEUX

50 ML/1.7 US FL OZ C

and co-founder of delilah

Cosmetics. Look for one

with skincare benefits, such

as smoothing peptides in

delilah Under Wear Future

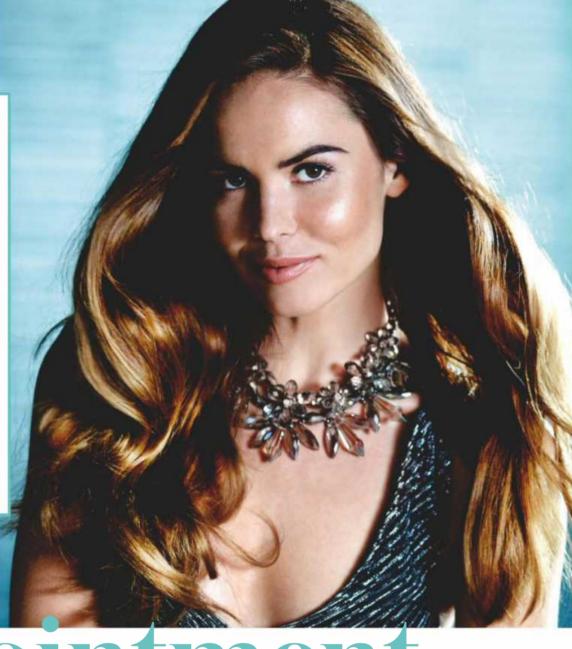
Resist Primer, £34. w&h

A FAULTLESS BLOW-DRY

Always guaranteed to make you feel just that little bit more party preened and polished.

→ Try the "low blow" look. "Women aren't after a big 'do' any more," says Andrea Wild at John Frieda Salons. "A blow-dry that's natural and less styled is the way most prefer to look now." The John Frieda Low Blow, £30, works on the natural texture of your hair by smoothing out sections to control frizz, then rolling into a loose pin curl to create one exaggerated kink in the hair length. The effect is more modern and suits all hair types.

+ When you need root lift, just take a big round brush and spritz it with a thickening spray (such as *Paul Mitchell Extra-Body Daily Boost, £15.75*), and blow-dry, tiny section by tiny section, the areas that need added volume.



appointment 2000 Appointment

W&H to YOUR hair rescue... Jo GB asks stylists to give us their insider tricks for when we can't quite fit them in

TRIM YOUR FRINGE

Less is more to get you through to your next haircut.

+ "ONLY ever take off the ends if necessary," advises James Galvin, style director at the new Daniel Galvin salon in Kensington. "If you do occasionally want to trim your own fringe, invest in some decent scissors – anything better than your kitchen/nail scissors will do." His trick? "Section off your fringe from the rest of your hair; comb it down and cut across freehand (this means without holding hair in your fingers). If you're confident, you could point-cut the ends (snip vertically) to give your fringe a slightly broken-up finish."



Get glossy

Be inspired from the salon to home with super shine treatments.

+ "Winter weather can be just as harsh on hair as the sun in summer. so upgrade your beauty routine to ensure your hair is getting the moisture it needs. I would recommend using a conditioning masque such as Herbal Essences Smooth & Soft Sensuously Smoothing Intensive Mask, £3.50. a couple of times a week, as this will help tame your hair into smoothness and fight humidity," says Ben Cooke, Herbal Essences ambassador.

+ "It's always important to use treatments at home so that you can maintain the hard work your hairdresser/colourist has put into your hair while you were at the salon," says James. "Look at this as YOUR at-home maintenance." Kérastase Chronologiste Essential Revitalising Balm, £32, is great for all hair types. "Apply to wet hair and wrap in a hot towel to lock in the goodness of the product. Better still, if you're a member of a gym that has a steam room, apply treatment and sit in the steam room for five to ten minutes. Your hair will feel amazing after this."



STRESS-FREE COLOUR

Super-fast cover-ups to perk you up in a hurry.

Try a wash of colour and shine

+ Think glossy colour balms for hair: low-maintenance hints of sheer colour designed to enhance and maintain vibrancy. Shu Uemura Art of Hair Color Lustre Shades Reviving Balm,

£32, smells luscious too and the colours are super natural, or Charles Worthington Colour Revive Mousse, £9.99, is easy to use, and there's even a clear glaze if you just want to reboot your shine.

+ "Clairol Nice 'N Easy Non-Permanent Hair Colour, £4.05, is a great way of sprucing up fading colour, and washes out after six to eight shampoos," says Jonathan Long at Lockonego. "It's quick and easy to do: if you're short on time, I would recommend running the colour

through the mid lengths and ends for five to ten minutes after shampooing, as this will enhance the intensity of your colour just enough to take

you from drab to fab!"

QUICK, COVER! More and more super-handy, don't-leavehome-without, fab root coverups are appearing on the shelves. W&H really rates the Kazumi Root Vanish Colouring Brush, £30 at Boots, which you blow-dry into hair so it seals and stays in place for hours if not days; or if you're in a hurry, spray in L'Oréal Professionnel Hair Touch Up Root Concealer, £12.99, in four colours.

Smooth out annoying kinks for super-sleek hair confidence

+ "Regular use of a smoothing shampoo and conditioner works with your hair to silken each strand and lock out humidity to prevent frizz from forming," says Ben Cooke, Global P&G hair ambassador. "Use a comb when applying conditioner, as it closes and smooths down hair cuticles." Try Pantene Pro-V Smooth

> & Sleek Conditioner, from £3.99. → Carry Kiehl's Crème with Silk Groom, £28.50, in your handbag,

KIEHL'S

DE WITH SHAK GROOM

which is great on dry or damp hair from the wind and rain. Alternatively, apply Kérastase Crème de la Crème Sumptuous Blow-Dry Control Cream, £19.50, to damp hair before blowdrying. "When blow-drying, tension is key," says James. "While it's slightly damp, pull it

smooth with a round brush (YS Park, from £21.25, is most loved by hairdressers). Make sure the nozzle of the drier follows the brush and heat is directed down the hair shaft to create a sleek finish."

TRY THIS

Once hair is smoothed and straightened, section it and use straighteners to create a more modern controlled kink midway through the length.

HOT TIP "If you don't have skill with a round brush, rough-dry hair until it's almost dry, then use a YS Park flat brush to smooth out the cuticle. Finally use smoothing irons on a medium heat."

+ Need to cheat? Paul Mitchell Neuro Style, £89.95, is a fast-heating straightener (230C in 30 seconds) that's great for home or office.



Try a Kérastase Fusio-Dose conditioning treatment, £15, as it lasts through your next three to four shampoos. Plus, now they're more tailor-made than ever, and instead of choosing from just four treatments, your hairdresser can mix and match up to 20 different combinations.

JO's IN THE KNOW... I recently had a nourishing mix to make my hair more supple and manageable. Every subsequent blow-dry I did was way nicer than before! w&h





Line & define Build up a luscious look with as

many coats of black mascara as you dare. Add definition and make lashes look even longer by dipping a fine liner brush into chocolate eyeshadow and dotting along the lashline between lashes. Get the look with Soap & Glory Thick & Fast HD Mascara High Definition Collagen Coat, £10.50 (Collect 42 Boots Advantage Card points), and Revlon ColorStay 16 Hour Eyeshadow Palette in Addictive, £7.99 (Collect 31 Boots Advantage Card points).



As your time to

Sexy smoky eyes, glossy lips and shimmering nails... your party season look awaits at Boots



fun. Try Max Factor Lipfinity Lip Colour in Stay Cheerful, £10.99 (Collect 43 Boots Advantage Card points), or Clinique Pop Lip Colour + Primer in Wow Pop, £16 (Collect 64 Boots Advantage Card points). Or go for a classic cherry red with L'Oréal Paris Infallible Mega Gloss in Miami Vice, £6.99 (Collect 27 Boots Advantage Card points).

order&

collect

in partnership with Boots

The new smoky

This season's smoky eye is updated with rich, gold-flecked tones. Wash a light shadow over lids, blend a deeper colour into the socket and highlight inner and outer corners with shimmering shades. We love these palettes:

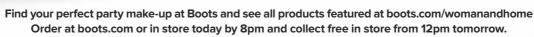
No7 80th Anniversary Eye Shadow
Palette 8g, £13.50 (Collect 54 Boots
Advantage Card points); Max Factor
Smokey Eye Drama Kit in Magnetic
Jades, £8.99 (Collect 35 Boots
Advantage Card points), and Lancôme
Hypnôse Star Eyes Palette in
Brun Adore, £38 (Collect 152
Boots Advantage Card points).

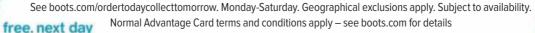
Finishing touch

Nothing says "party" like a sparkly manicure, and on-trend metallics are the perfect way to add a final flourish. Try layering steely grey with a glitterflecked top coat for a sophisticated take on the trend, or add a flash of sparkle just to the tips of bare nails - anything goes! Create a bespoke look with Nails Inc Trafalgar Square Magnetic Nail Polish 10ml, £13 (Collect 52 Boots Advantage Card points), under Orly Colour Blast Silver 3D Glitter 11ml, £9.50 (Collect 38 Boots Advantage Card points). And no one will be able to resist the adorable crème and glitter Ciaté Paint Pot Pair 2 x 5ml, £10 (Collect 40 Boots Advantage Card points).



MAX FACTO







A NOURISHING MEAL REPLACEMENT

to beat the dieting blues...

Want a healthy and effective way to lose weight and feel good this winter?

Almased® offers a weight loss programme that can help you lose weight, while preserving essential muscle mass. Its unique formula is clinically tested to provide healthy nutrition and sustainable weight loss. Ensuring that the product is as natural as possible, Almased® blends only fermented soya, yogurt and raw-enzyme honey, for a formula so safe that even people with diabetes can use it.

Use Almased® as a meal replacement any time of the day by mixing 5 heaped tablespoons with 200-350ml of water or 200ml of low-fat milk. It helps nourish the body and promotes healthy, long-term weight management and overall good health.

Gluten-Free Vegetarian Non-GMO Suitable for Diabetics Contains no artificial flavours, fillers, preservatives or stimulants



Almased



Need help with your diet?

Almased® nutritionist Katie Hipwell can provide advice on any part of the programme. You can contact Katie directly at **nutritionist@almased.co.uk.** For more information, call us on **0207 969 1886** or visit **www.almased.co.uk.**

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...simply because it works



Claim your **FREE Almased® Figure Plans** or download at **www.almased.co.uk**.

If you are taking medication for diabetes, check with your doctor or health practitioner before changing your diet.

FEEL GOOD YOU

Diet + Nutrition + Exercise + Wellbeing

Party on...

but don't pile on the pounds!

With the festive season upon us, nutritionist Fiona Hunter explains how to avoid the dieting pitfalls

Most party food is small, delicious and deceptively high in fat — making it all too easy to consume several hundred calories in just a few mouthfuls. But if you follow our guide, you'll find there are plenty of ways to indulge and still fit into your LBD!



- ➤ Smoked salmon A good source of omega-3 fats, which will help keep your heart healthy and skin youthful. A generous portion (50g) contains just 80 calories. Smoked salmon blinis are slightly less virtuous thanks to the soured cream.
- ➤ **Prawns** No need to feel guilty about pigging out on seafood. It's low in fat and calories 1 tiger prawn contains 15 calories.
- ➤ Breadsticks/grissini and tomato salsa Salsa is low in fat, rich in vitamin C and lycopene, a phytochemical that helps protect against cancer. 2tbsp contains just 30 calories.
- ➤ Devils on horseback These tasty treats of prunes wrapped in bacon are just 65 calories each and come with the added bonus of useful dietary fibre, vitamin K and potassium. Save calories by using lean back bacon rather than streaky.
- ➤ **Vegetable crudités** Pile your plate high they're fat free and full of vitamins. You can eat 40 cherry tomatoes for the same calorie cost as a large handful (25g) of tortilla chips.
- ➤ Dates At just 35 calories each, plump, juicy Medjool dates are a great way to satisfy a sweet tooth and a tasty alternative to mince pies they also provide a good amount of fibre.
- ➤ Olives Surprisingly low in calories, 1 olive contains just 5 calories and they contain heart-friendly unsaturated fats.



DANGER AHEAD

- ➤ Guacamole Avocados are full of fat; sure, it's the healthy type but sadly this will still add inches to your waistline. Just 1 heaped tablespoon of guacamole is 120 calories. Add some tortilla chips and it's easy to consume the equivalent of a full-blown meal.
- ➤ **Houmous** This is high in fibre (which is a good thing) but also high in fat (not so good). If you're counting the calories choose reduced-fat varieties. 2tbsp (60g) contains 120 calories.
- ➤ Sausage rolls/spring rolls/quiche Best to avoid anything made from pastry or that's deep fried 1 mini sausage roll contains 150 calories, 1 spring roll is 120 calories.
- ➤ Crisps, tortilla chips and prawn crackers
 Just say no. Don't kid yourself that vegetable
 crisps are a healthier option they're not!
- ➤ **Nuts** Better for you than crisps but nuts are still a high-fat option, so proceed with caution. A small handful (25g) of salted peanuts contains 150 calories.
 - ➤ Mayo or soured cream Avoid creamy dips, coleslaw, potato salad in fact anything smothered in mayonnaise, soured cream or crème fraîche. w&h

Boost your energy.

We love the festive season, but all the prep and celebrations can knock the stuffing out of you. Try our quick ideas to keep you going

Revive your inner hostess

THE PROBLEM It's your party but now everyone's here you feel like crawling into bed. You daft thing, you've overdone it in your quest to give everyone a great time!

THE SOLUTION Vitamin B12 is still the energy reviver par excellence and will give you a proverbial kick in the pants when you need it most.

CHOOSE An easy-use underthe-tongue spray that does the business super fast. Normally you should resist taking it after lunch as it keeps you going too long. But it's time to party so get spraying now.

WE LIKE Better You B12 Boost Pure Energy, £11.95 for 25ml, victoriahealth.com. Each spray delivers a mega 1,200mcg blast.

Beat the energy slump

THE PROBLEM That long lunch has taken its toll and you're not sure how you're going to find the stamina for family games.

THE SOLUTION The easy answer is prevention rather than cure. Nutritionist Shona Wilkinson gives us a steer...

➤ Take an enzyme "If you suffer bloating or pain after eating cream, milk or cheese, you may need help digesting lactose," says Shona. "A supplement containing lactase will help to break down the lactose."

Try Quest Lactase, £7.99 for 30 tablets, nutricentre.com. Take them twice a day over the festive period.

- ➤ **Drink more** "Have a glass of water between each alcoholic drink," says Shona. "It can slow down your drinking and help prevent overeating."
- ➤ Eat wisely "Fill at least half your plate with vegetables before adding anything else. And no, this doesn't include roast potatoes! Greens are low in calories and high in fibre, vitamins and minerals."
- ➤ Pop a supplement "Milk thistle can prevent and relieve symptoms associated with overindulgence," says Shona. Try Solgar Milk Thistle Full Potency, £10.49 for 50 caps, nutricentre.com

Perk yourself up

"Add a few drops of clove, cardamom cinnamon and orange essential oils to a vaporiser," suggests expert Ines Willis. "They're great pickme-ups when feeling tired. One drop of each is enough"



Power through the prep

THE PROBLEM Decisions! From the lunch menu to who's invited, giving the right gifts to whether to attend that party – all guaranteed to hype up anxiety and drain energy. So how do we make angst-free decisions?

THE SOLUTION Mindfulness.

"When making decisions, many of us get caught in a double anxiety," says Dr Ken Verni. "We worry not only about the negative side of the options, but also whether it's the right decision. The stress caused by this uncertainty can continue long after the action has been taken." Dr Verni's mindful moves can help...

QUICK DECIDER

1 Get yourself into a mindful state: empty your mind of preoccupations

and focus on the issues at hand.

- **2 Scan** your thoughts and identify emotional factors peer pressure, anxiety about confrontations, etc.
- **3 Dismiss** these issues from your thinking process.
- **4 Engage** with the logic of the situation and weigh up your options.
- **5 Listen** to your intuition does it confirm your rational judgement? If not, do you know why it's sending you a different message?
- **6 Clear** a space in your head for your final choice among alternatives.
- **7 Make** the choice decisively, without regretful backward looks. Find more in *Practical Mindfulness: A Step-By-Step Guide* by Dr Ken Verni, £12.99 (DK Books).



Be ready for anything

THE PROBLEM You've a mega party to attend and you know it's going to be a late one. But then there's work in the morning too. Yikes! Where do we find the energy?

THE SOLUTION "I know that problem only too well," says top pharmacist Margo Marrone, founder of The Organic Pharmacy. "Here's my tip."

- + Before you go out, take a big dose of non-acidic vitamin C (2,000mg).
- + Take another after you get home.
- + And another when you wake up in the morning.

"Not only does vitamin C help protect the liver, but it also helps boost energy," says Margo. "It needs to be non-acidic, otherwise you get an upset tummy." **CHOOSE** Ester C 1,000, £16.95 for 60 caps, theorganicpharmacy.com

- a non-acidic form of vitamin C.

Get the job done

THE PROBLEM You've only written a few Christmas cards and you can feel energy leeching away. It's not just card-writing that starts out as fun then becomes a grind. Even decorating the tree and wrapping gifts can end up on that list too. So how do we rediscover our energy and enthusiasm?

THE SOLUTION Flower essences can be a quick-acting reviver. "They're good for dealing with procrastination and getting up the muster for doing things," says expert Clare Harvey. Try these:

- ➤ Turkey Bush by Flower Essences of Australia – good for frustration due to blocked creative expression. Helps to support focus and confidence to tap into creativity and inspiration. Just what you need to write inspired greetings!
- ➤ Banksia Robur by Flower Essences of Australia for lack of enthusiasm, low energy levels and burnout. Renews energy, enthusiasm and zest. Lead us to that mountain of gift wrapping!
- ➤ Positivity by Flower Essences of Australia for when you feel negative and stuck. Encourages positive thoughts and thinking outside the box. Let's do something new with that tree! Find Flower Essences of Australia from £8.50 for 25ml at flowersense.co.uk >>

Get down with the kids again

THE PROBLEM The little ones are driving you crazy and a headache's coming on.

THE SOLUTION Rest your head on a book to reboot your energy. How? By combining firm pressure and yoga.

CHILD'S POSE PLUS

- ➤ **Kneel** on your hands and knees, separating your knees by a hip width. Breathe in deeply through your nose.
- ➤ Exhale through your mouth, lowering your bottom to your heels, lengthening your tail bone away from your pelvis.
- ➤ Let your torso fold over your thighs, lengthen your neck and let your forehead rest on a heavy-ish book.
- ➤ Lay arms by thighs with palms facing up, feeling the weight of your shoulders spreading across your shoulder blades.
- ➤ Take several deep breaths into your belly as you rest there for a while. KNEES NOT UP TO IT? Lie on your back and rest the book on your forehead for ten minutes.

WHY THE BOOK? The pressure works on the vagus nerve to calm the nervous system – good for soothing a headache.



Recover your get up and go

THE PROBLEM You've woken up with a hangover and the family is arriving soon. Who's going to make up beds and so on? THE SOLUTION A blend of smart remedies and common sense will sort you out. If you have a hangover... "We get hangovers when ethanol is oxidized into acetaldehyde, causing us to

dehydrate, leeching vitamins (especially Bs) and lowering blood sugar, bringing on nausea, headache, thirst and digestive upset," says ayurveda guru Sebastian Pole. "Rehydrate with lots of water and vitamins."

- + Take aloe vera "my favourite for cooling and nourishing the digestive tract and helping liver," says Sebastian.
- + "Eat cleansing green foods such as kale sprouts, chlorella and spirulina, all excellent at speeding up liver metabolism and

replenishing vitamin B."

TRY Pukka Aloe Vera Juice, £19.95 for 1 litre, pukkaherbs.com. Clean Greens Powder, £27.95 for 112g, planetorganic.com **w**&h



W&H EXCLUSIVE

Join Linda Barker's two-day Nourish event

Take charge of your wellbeing in 2016 at this inspiring weekend



Welcome 2016 with a healthy mind and body, by joining Nourish, a wellbeing event hosted by designer and presenter Linda Barker. Now in her fifties, Linda has combined her enthusiasm

for health and fitness with a collection of experts to create an inspiring wellbeing event. It will deliver practical advice to help you achieve a healthier mind and body.

YOUR TWO-DAY NOURISH EVENT

In the stunning surroundings of Grays Court Hotel, York, you will attend a series of workshops and presentations from Linda's guest gurus and accomplished educators, and will cover:

- + How to prepare fabulous, healthy food
- + How to feed your body what it really needs + How to turn your garden into your larder and chemist + How to take time out to recognise what is really important in this life + How to change the way you feel about changing the way you look
- "My Nourish event is all about good food, good fun and good company. We'll keep you busy, we'll keep you questioning, we'll keep you inspired - and we'll keep you thinking long after the weekend is over." LINDA BARKER

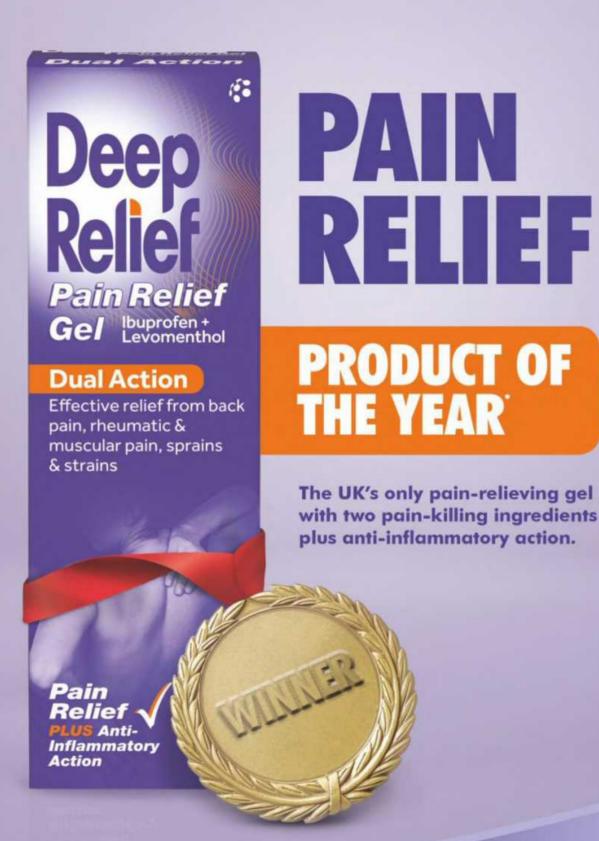
BOOK NOW!

Date Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 January 2016.

Time 9.30am for registration for a 10.00am start, until 5.30pm each day (optional 8.30am yoga session*). Where Grays Court Hotel, York. Tickets £275, which include access to all seminars and workshops, all drinks, juices, light food and a healthy lunch on both days. BOOK AT www.nourishevents.co.uk











*As voted by independent pharmacists in The Pharmacy Product of the Year Awards.

Available from most high street, community pharmacies and grocery stores nationwide.

Always read the label.



From the makers of DEPHENT www.deep-relief.co.uk

LOOK 5LB SLIMMER mo anet requirea!

The secret is in the way you hold yourself, as fitness expert Lucy Wyndham-Read explains...

here's nothing more gracious and elegant than perfect posture – it can cause heads to turn just as fast as a great dress. I was once at a fitness convention full of young, super-toned instructors leaping on and off the stage in neon leotards, but then one lady walked on stage and made the whole conference go quiet... none of us had ever seen such a striking woman and it was all down to her posture! She was in her late fifties, a beautiful, curvaceous size

16, and she oozed confidence from every pore and every movement she took. From her walking on to the stage to being seated was like watching a ballet. From that day on, I have always taught my clients about posture – it not only makes us look taller, slimmer and instantly more elegant, but also shouts out that we have more confidence than Madonna (who incidentally always has amazing posture). Try these easy tricks and feel yourself become instantly taller and slimmer!

Time to belt up

➤ One of the most important muscles that's responsible for giving us perfect posture is called the transverse abdominis, a large, fibrous band that wraps around our middle and is often referred to as our "core". This acts like a corset and the stronger it is, the better posture you have (plus the flatter your abs are). A great way to strengthen this muscle is by using a piece of string.

+ All you have to do is stand tall and with good posture, then pull in your tummy muscles really tight. Now tie a piece of string around your waist, keeping your tummy pulled in – as

soon as you relax your tummy muscles, the string will feel tight so it prompts you to pull back in. This is a good drill to do every day and you only need to spend a couple of minutes doing this, so it's great to have a go when you're chopping veg or cooking in the kitchen, as you can be toning your abs at the same time.

Declutter your handbag

➤ Every time you sling your handbag over your shoulder, you could be sabotaging your posture — the heavier your bag is, the more weight you're applying to one side of your body, which will have an effect on your posture. If you must carry a heavy load, then a backpack is the optimum choice, or decant into two bags and carry one either side of your body.

Get up every 20 minutes...

➤ Even if it's just to get some water, stretch or walk around – this will help you limber up and prevent slouching. When we sit for long periods, we apply more compression to our spine and our shoulders can become rounded. Try setting a reminder on your phone.

Be a tilt girl

- ➤ Tight hip flexors can result in poor posture. Hip flexors are tiny ligaments situated on the front of your hips, and when we sit for long periods, these can become shortened and pull on our pelvis. Try doing daily pelvic tilts:

 1- Lie on your back with your knees bent
- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor, with your arms by your sides and palms facing down.
- ★ Keep your spine in neutral in line with your hips and shoulders, and not arched.
- → Take a big breath in through your nose and gently exhale through your mouth as you pull your navel towards your

spine, tilting your pelvis so your pubic bone lifts and you lower your back to the floor. Hold for a few seconds; return to the start; repeat 10 times.

REMEMBER

Keep your head lifted, chin parallel to the ground, shoulders pulled back, tummy pulled in – you'll instantly look lighter!

Stretch to the stars

➤ Re-engage your posture first thing in the morning to quickly readjust your muscles and pull everything back into place:

- + Stand with your feet hip-widthdistance apart and arms by your sides.
- Imagine you have a piece of string from the top of your head pulling you up to the ceiling, so you lift your entire body, making it as tall as possible but keeping feet firmly placed on the floor. Keep tummy muscles pulled in tight and take a deep breath in; as you inhale, raise arms directly above your head and gently clasp your hands, then slightly bend your upper body to the right, hold for a couple of seconds and return to the other side, while taking deep breaths in and out. Be sure to not lean forwards or backwards. Repeat these alternating side stretches 10 times every morning.

Love your bones

Lunges help strengthen bones – the scaffolding to keep your body straight.



+ Stand in a stance slightly wider than shoulder-width-distance apart; place hands on hips, with shoulders pulled back and your chest lifted.



+ Step forwards into a lunge.
Don't let the front knee come
over the line of your toes; the knee
of your back leg should point to the
ground, with upper body straight.
Hold for 20 seconds, then lunge
forwards on the other leg. Rest for
10 seconds; repeat several times.



Practise the Fallen Angel Lift

This exercise is a particular lifesaver if you've been stuck in front of a computer all day. Aim to do 10 of these every day to help realign your upper body:



Lie face down on a mat and extend both arms out to either side, aiming to have your hands in line with your shoulders, with your palms facing forwards and thumbs pointing up to the ceiling.



+ Now lift both arms up high and out to your sides, by squeezing your shoulder blades together. Hold, and then slowly lower back to your start position.

Feel the freeze

➤ Grab a post-it note, write "ice cube" on it, then stick on the side of your computer screen as a visual prompt:

- Sitting with your feet flat on the floor and nice and tall, visualise that someone has just dropped an ice cube down your back — this will instantly realign your spine and naturally pull you in to the correct upright posture; you should aim to always maintain this position.

As we're distracted by the phone or emails, we end up curving through our spine and rounding





our shoulders. That's why these notes work. w&h

.....

You raised £10m for breast concer cancer. ...thank you!

We celebrate more than 10 years of Pink Ribbonwalks, raising money for our special charity Breast Cancer Care



When woman&home first made the decision to support Breast Cancer Care, we did so because of what you told us. And you told us not just moving stories of your own experience and of loved ones affected by this cruel disease, but also of wanting to make a difference. It was a feeling I shared as, like many of you, I have lost dear friends to breast cancer as well as, thankfully, seen others regain their health.

The idea for the Pink Ribbonwalks came about as a result of a collaboration between woman&home and the team at Breast Cancer Care. It was 2005 when we asked you to join us for the first ever one at Blenheim Palace, and were thrilled when so many of you responded. I remember it only too well. The car park was almost under water as we all set off in the most torrential rain! Happily it didn't dampen spirits too much.

Since then there have been 41 Pink Ribbonwalks, raising a staggering £10.6 million, and joining you on so many of the walks in support of the vital work achieved by Breast Cancer Care has been a highlight of the year for my team and me.

I know you will join with me in wishing Breast Cancer Care continuing success with their incredibly valuable work.

See Tames
Editorial Director



HOW YOUR MONEY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Provides a headscarf for a woman who has lost her hair during treatment.
Provides a detailed information pack for

25 Provides a detailed information pack for someone newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

£10 Teaches someone how to be breast aware at a local workshop.

£25 Trains and supports a member of our Nursing Network for a year to help improve the care of people with breast cancer.

£50 Cost of a Headstrong appointment to help women prepare for the shock of losing their hair from chemotherapy.

£100 Pays for four calls to our confidential helpline so people with breast concerns can get support from our experts.

£150 Matches someone living with breast cancer with one of our volunteers for six sessions of one-to-one phone support.

£250 Funds a Breast Cancer Care hospital information point for a year so people affected by breast cancer have access to our latest resources when visiting the clinic.

£500 Provides support for a younger woman with breast cancer, including access to our helpline, website, publications and a two-day course with expert speakers and specialist nurses.

£1,000 Allows ten women with secondary breast cancer (cancer that has spread to another part of the body) to attend support sessions run by specialist therapists with expert guest speakers.

£5,000 Pays for 20 people to attend a four-week Moving Forward course with expert speakers and specialist nurses to fully prepare for life after treatment.



There have been Pink Ribbonwalks since 2005

MEET THE W&H WALKERS



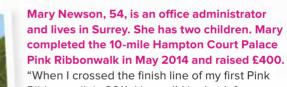
Sue Beeson, 55, is married and lives in Surrey. Sue took part in the Marble Hill Park walk in June 2013 and raised over £3,000.

"Taking part in the Pink Ribbonwalk is a memory I'll never forget. Losing a close colleague to breast cancer two years ago hit me really hard and I saw it as my chance to help raise awareness of the disease. I signed up with six friends. Before the walk, we all did a warm-up together and, three-and-a-half hours later, the seven of us linked arms to cross the finish together. It was such an emotional moment, but we all felt so proud of ourselves."



After losing a friend to breast cancer, Lisa Martin, 49, called upon online friends to raise money for Breast Cancer Care.
Lisa lives in Sussex and is married with a grown-up daughter.

"My first Pink Ribbonwalk was five years ago and I walked in memory of my close friend Anne, who died of breast cancer. She was in her forties and left behind two teenage sons and her husband. I was devastated and really felt their pain. When I read about the Pink Ribbonwalk, I thought it would be a fantastic challenge to do in her memory. The walk was at Blenheim Palace and I went with nine other women from the w&h forums. There was a real team spirit and, although it was tough, we all made it over the line. It was such an uplifting experience."



Ribbonwalk in 2011, I knew I'd be back for more

– and I was! The sun shone as I walked along the
banks of the River Thames and passed gorgeous
herds of deer last year with my children. As I
watched other friends link arms and spur each
other on, I felt completely uplifted – and it reminded
me why I support such a worthwhile cause."



have been walked!

JOIN THE PINK RIBBONWALKS 2016!

Register your interest for the 2016 Pink Ribbonwalks at **breastcancercare.org. uk/ribbonwalk-womanandhome** to receive a £5 discount off your entry fee when registration opens in January.

HORMONES



HAYMRE? What really works

Despite the new guidelines on HRT, many of us prefer to try alternatives. Patsy Westcott talks to experts, and famous names tell what works for them

nsure about HRT or confused about complementary therapies? A recent report from the respected North American Menopause Society (NAMS) reviewed all the evidence for non-hormonal therapies and their effect on hot flushes and night sweats.

Phat works Only Cognitive
Behavioural Therapy (CBT), including
advice on relaxation and sleep hygiene
(things like winding down before bed,
going to bed at the same time), clinical
hypnosis or hypnotherapy and some

low-dose antidepressants, and other prescribed non-hormonal drugs (which require specialist advice, see the chart opposite) get the NAMS seal of approval. Consultant gynaecologist Professor Janice Rymer of King's College, London comments, "We don't know the mechanism by which these work because we don't really know what causes flushes. However, what they seem to have in common is that they all act on the nervous system." This fits with current thinking that, although the dip in oestrogen at menopause is somehow

responsible, an over-reactive autonomic nervous system that controls things like breathing, heart rate, sweating and the fight-and-flight reflex, may be the immediate underlying cause.

Could be worth a try A cautious thumbs up goes to isoflavones, plant chemicals found in soya beans, soya milk and tofu, and isoflavone supplements such as red clover. The only snag is that they don't work for everyone. Your gut bacteria have to be able to convert isoflavones into an active chemical called equol. If you're not an

equol producer, you may still be plagued by flushes, no matter how much soya milk you quaff or how many supplements you take. Weight loss and mindfulness-based stress reduction could also help, says NAMS, although the evidence isn't cast iron.

- ➤ What doesn't work Perhaps surprising to the many who swear by them, NAMS concludes that yoga and acupuncture do nothing to quell flushes. Avoiding trigger factors like hot rooms, alcohol and caffeinated drinks doesn't reduce the number of flushes either. Even aerobic exercise gets a thumbs down, although of course it has myriad other benefits at midlife.
- ➤ Unlikely to work Herbal remedies such as Black Cohosh, thought to work by blocking oestrogen receptors, and the Chinese herb Dong Quai, which has question marks over safety, were also rejected by NAMS. Chiropractic and nutritional supplements, such as linseeds (flax), which contains oestrogen-like chemicals, evening primrose oil, omega-3s, vitamins, minerals and pollen, are all also dismissed on grounds of inadequate evidence.

The North American Menopause Society RECOMMENDS

Good evidence

- ➤ CBT and clinical hypnosis
- ➤ Prescription drugs (require specialist advice)

Seroxat (paroxetine) and other SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors)

Effexor (venlafaxine), an SNRI (selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor)

Lyrica, a central nervous system depressant used for epilepsy and chronic pain, and others from the same family (gabapentinoids)

Dixarit (clonidine), a migraine drug that prevents widening of blood vessels and increased blood flow to skin

CAUTIOUSLY RECOMMENDS

Some evidence

- ➤ Weight loss
- ➤ Mindfulness-based stress reduction
- ➤ Soya isoflavones

DOESN'T RECOMMEND

No, insufficient or inconclusive evidence

- ➤ Cooling techniques
- ➤ Avoiding triggers
- ➤ Exercise
- > Yoga
- ➤ Relaxation
- ➤ Acupuncture
- ➤ Herbal and nutritional supplements other than soya

HRT- what you need to know

IS IT EFFECTIVE? Yes, it's *the* most effective solution for hot flushes and night sweats – medically referred to as menopausal vasomotor symptoms. It also helps prevent osteoporosis and may protect against heart disease if started close to menopause.

IS IT SAFE? There are risks and benefits. There's a slight increase in breast cancer risk if you take combined HRT for more than five years, which declines once you stop taking it. If you start taking HRT close to the time of your last period, it helps to protect your arteries against furring and hardening (atherosclerosis), and the development of harmful "plaques" (fatty build-ups that can rupture, causing a blood clot, which can lead to a heart attack). If, however, you start taking HRT at 60+ it can increase your risk of heart problems as chances are the process of atherosclerosis has already begun. HRT can trigger an inflammatory reaction that can destabilise plaques, which can lead to rupture and

clotting. If you do start HRT for the first time after your 60th birthday, the doctor should prescribe the lowest dose. Vaginal oestrogen pessaries, gels and creams are fine at any time after the menopause because they act locally rather than being absorbed into your bloodstream.

WHAT ABOUT BIOIDENTICAL

HORMONES? These are hormones synthesised from plant chemicals found in yam and soya, with the same molecular structure as those produced in your body. By this token, oestradiol, the most common form of oestrogen used in conventional HRT, is bioidentical. Although touted as a more natural or gentle alternative, like conventional HRT, bioidentical hormones are still synthesised in a lab. There is no evidence they are better tolerated or absorbed than

conventional
HRT. And they
still carry the
same risks.

New menopause guidelines

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has recently issued its first menopause guideline:

- ➤ You should be able to discuss the menopause and tailored treatment options with a medical professional.
- ➤ HRT should be offered for hot flushes, night sweats and mood swings after discussing risks and benefits.
- ➤ If symptoms don't improve after a treatment trial you should be referred to a menopause specialist. Referral should also be considered for people with symptoms who can't take HRT.
- ➤ A risk of heart disease shouldn't automatically rule out HRT.
- ➤ Transdermal HRT delivery via a patch or gel is associated with less risk of blood clotting than oral HRT (pills), because it only passes through the liver once rather than twice.
 - ➤ Oestrogen-only HRT has lower risk in some circumstances than combined. >>

What worked for us

Five famous names tell Scarlett Russell how they coped with the menopause

HRT made me feel like "me" again



Janet Ellis, 60, TV presenter, actress and author. "I was well into

my fifties when my

Proper research

menopause was

so reassuring

menopause started. My hot flushes weren't too severe and I've had no night sweats, though I've had real

difficulty sleeping and felt anxious. I never suffered from PMT, in fact I loved taking the pill, so have no problem with taking HRT, but

I took plenty of advice from the charity Wellbeing of Women (wellbeingofwomen.org.uk).

We have a history of breast cancer in my family but I talked to friends and my doctor, and decided that it was better to feel better and

take that risk, than not. I haven't regretted it. I've had no side effects, apart from some bleeding after the taking the first one (I thought those days were behind me!). I changed the type of HRT I was on and felt a difference after a few weeks. I started sleeping better and generally feeling more positive. Medicine aside, the menopause made me forgetful so I find it

helpful making lists for everything. Proper and talking about research and talking about it was incredibly reassuring too.

TOP TIP If the first HRT

you take doesn't suit you, keep going until you find the one that does. It's powerful and chemical - you've got to find the right combination. Don't be afraid to ask for a female physician - a young male doctor probably isn't the best person to talk to."

Exercise, less caffeine but the odd glass of wine



Karen Barber, 54, Olympic English ice skater.

"My menopause hit in 2011. The worst symptoms for me were night sweats. I was

waking up drenched two or three times a night, then the next day I felt drained. I also became emotional about ridiculous things – I've always been a positive, happy person, but suddenly there was this sense of impending doom. I decided against HRT, as the potential side effects worried me. I came across Promensil, a herbal supplement made with red clover isoflavones, a plant-derived compound with estrogenic activity, and while it didn't take away my symptoms, it made them far more manageable. Menopause gets easier over time - it took me six months to find what worked for me. TOP TIP Exercise. I skate less but have replaced it with Zumba and hikes."

I've gained weight but have more energy



Helen Lederer, 61, comedy writer, actress and author of Losing It (Pan Macmillan). "With the menopause, I've found the best way is just

to persevere, try things out and talk about it. My menopause didn't start until I was 56 or 57. Although I had memory loss and hot flushes, the most debilitating for me was fatigue and feeling low. I met Marion Gluck, whose London clinic specialises in treatments in tablet form, using bioidentical hormones - sourced from soya beans and Mexican yams - to treat the hormone imbalance brought on by menopause. I'm more overweight since taking them, but they give me energy and suppress symptoms. When I do get the odd hot flush, I just wait for it to pass.

TOP TIP Seek medication, do your research and do what feels right for you."

I breezed through my menopause!



Jo Wood, 60, ex-model and TV personality, and founder of Jo Wood Organics and Jo Wood Interiors.

"I had hot flushes when my menopause first started and my periods were erratic, but it was nothing too extreme. I didn't want the hot flushes to become problematic though, so went to see a naturopath. She advised me to take a natural supplement called Estrobalance - I never wanted to be on HRT - which I took every day for about four years. I believe my diet has prevented me from having a miserable menopause. I don't eat dairy or red meat, have very little sugar, and lots of fruit and veg. I never had sleep problems during my menopause, which I thank yoga for. I was always determined that my periods would go out as smoothly as they came in! TOP TIP Eat well. Stay away from processed foods and refined sugar."

Foggy brain, memory loss, hot flushes, disturbed sleep... I've had them all!



Nadine Dorries, 58, is a Conservative MP and author. "You name the menopausal symptom, I've had it. I'm also totally irrational at

times. Like when my husband Chris forgot to book a flight for our holiday and I had a tantrum. Fortunately he's very patient. My symptoms started when I was 51, and I take a synthetic oestrogen HRT, Tibolone, which suited me best. I've developed menopausal arthritis, which causes my joints to ache, but exercise helps that. I still get some hot flushes. My hair fell out too - a combination of the menopause and stress. Imedeen supplements helped. TOP TIP For a good night's sleep, I take the occasional Nytol tablet. I've also found it's helpful to take your HRT at the same time every day, to keep levels balanced." w&h



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Accidents

..do you know what to do?

Hopefully nothing will go wrong, but GP Dr Rosemary

Leonard gives some practical tips on what

to do if the unexpected does happen



I feel a bit like a spoilsport writing this. After all, Christmas is a time for having fun, not doing a crash course in first aid on your friends or family.

But the reality is that having a house full of visitors, cooking large meals, all those scented candles, using fairy lights of unknown vintage, plus opening boxes stuck down with lots of tape mean that accidents can and do happen (especially after a few glasses of mulled wine).

So here are some practical tips on what to do if the unexpected happens.

BURNS

Christmas, sadly, is a peak time for burns, whether from cooking or candles.

+ What to do The aim of treating a burn is to cool the skin to limit tissue damage, so flood it with cold water for at least ten minutes. Remove jewellery, watches or anything that could constrict the skin as it swells. Cover the area with clean, non-fluffy material, and ideally bandage in place (rather than use adhesive plaster). Don't apply cream as this may damage skin more and increase the risk of infection. Leave blisters intact as this protects damaged skin and new skin will form underneath. If a blister bursts, don't peel off the rest – just cover the area. Call for urgent help if... the burn is larger or it has gone through the skin, which may not be painful (as pain sensation has been lost). The skin will look waxy, pale or



CHOKING

Adults and children can easily
,choke when food gets stuck in

airways and it's frightening and dangerous. The message: chewing food is important, no matter what your age.

+ What to do Stand to one side of the person, bend them over one arm, and use the other to give five slaps on the back between shoulder blades. If this

fails, stand behind them with your arms around the top of the tummy, below the breastbone, make a fist with one hand, and grasp with your other. Pull inwards and upwards five times, a method known as abdominal thrusts. For babies and toddlers, use fingers rather than a fist.

Call for urgent medical help if... the choking persists, or the person weakens or becomes unconscious.

charred, rather than red.

CUTS One of my pet hates are items in hard plastic covers, for which you need a sharp knife to open. I've lost count of the times I've sliced one of my fingers. + What to do Apply pressure using kitchen towel. If the wound is gaping, press on either side. You'll need to keep pressing for five minutes to stop the bleeding. Cover with a plaster,

or in a gaping wound pull the edges

these on for a few days to aid healing.

together with Steri-Strips. Leave

Deep wounds may need professional help. If unsure, phone your GP.

Spurting blood suggests a severed artery. It can help to apply indirect pressure to the artery - for the hand, press down on the artery as it runs over the bone in the wrist, and raise the affected part above the heart. The other thing to watch for, especially in fingers, is cutting through a tendon. If you can't move a finger properly, then get medical advice.

Call for urgent medical help if... a cut is spurting blood and you can't stem it.

Many of us dream of having a white Christmas, but unfortunately my surgery is inundated with calls the moment there is a light white covering outside. + What to do For minor injuries to muscles and tendons, the rule is RICE - Rest, Ice and Elevation. For a leg, that means getting it above the level of the hip joint. For arms, use a scarf to lift the wrist up to neck level. To apply ice, use freezer blocks or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel to avoid an ice burn. Keep on for at least half an hour. For bad sprains, repeated icing over a day reduces swelling. If anyone has banged their head, check for symptoms of concussion. These include confusion, no memory of what happened before

the fall, dazed and unable to answer questions immediately, blurred vision, nausea or vomiting, and a headache. Anyone with any of these, or who has been knocked out, should be checked by a doctor. Some injuries, such as a dislocated finger, are obvious. But it can be difficult to tell how severe an injury is, particularly around the ankle. A bad sprain, where a ligament is torn, can be just as painful as a small fracture. If you have doubts about an injury, try and see your GP first, rather than waiting hours at your local A&E for a sprained ankle. Call for urgent help if... a limb is clearly deformed, indicating a fracture, or a limb can't be moved. A sign of a hip fracture in an older person is a shortening of the affected leg - so compare to the other one.

ELECTRICAL BURNS residue on the skin, which is a sign of Reduce the risk by buying arching high-voltage electricity. Plus, from a reputable retailer of course, if the person is unconscious rather than being tempted by

lower priced, non-branded goods. + What to do Break contact with the source of electricity, but don't touch the casualty as they could electrocute you. Switch off at the mains, but if you can't, use a wooden broom handle or chair leg to push the person away from the appliance. Don't use metal and keep away from water, as these can conduct electricity. Skin will be damaged at the entry and exit point of the current - cool with water once there's no risk of further electrocution. Call for urgent help if... the skin is charred, or there is a brown coppery





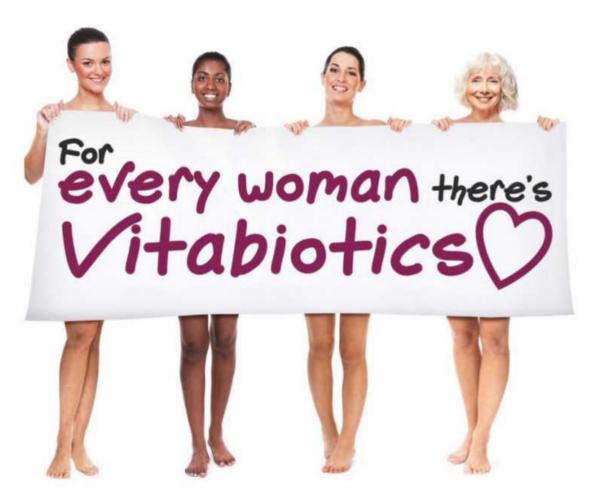


MY CHRISTMAS FIRST AID ESSENTIALS

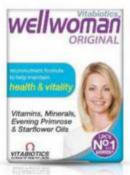
Medicines last longer in a cool, dry cupboard, so find somewhere other than the bathroom to store them

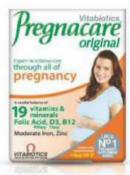
- ♣ A selection of plasters in different sizes, plus a packet of Steri-Strips.
- + An old-fashioned roll of bandage, and a sterile lint pad. These should last for years.
- + A small pair of scissors, and a pair of tweezers.
- ♣ Paracetamol good for headaches and flu symptoms, and ibuprofen, also good for these, plus better than paracetamol for sprains and strains. If children are coming to stay for Christmas, get small bottles of the liquid versions.
- ♣ Antihistamine tablets for allergies, especially if you have pets in your house, which may trigger sneezing in a visitor.
- + 1% hydrocortisone cream
- for allergic rashes.
- + And in the freezer at least two large cool packs. Soft ones are easier to shape round a sprained limb than the solid ones. w&h















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Lyme disease is on the increase, yet diagnosis can be difficult and untreated infection can result in life-changing illness, as these stories show...



Claire Enders, 57, founder and CEO of Enders Analysis, a leading media research company, tells how a missed diagnosis of Lyme disease caused her immune system to close down,

putting her life at risk. Claire is married with a grown-up son and daughter.

I want to spread awareness of the risk from tick bites that often don't show the classic rash GPs are taught to look for, to save other people the chronic pain and loss of health I have suffered.

Last June, I became ill with what's now known to be Lyme disease. Although I'd had it 12 years earlier, no one in the practice where I'd been treated before thought to get a test done or prescribe antibiotics.

The result was catastrophic. The disease attacked my joints and soft tissues to



the point where I was on morphine and in a wheelchair. I saw many specialists and kept saying I had Lyme disease but I was told it was all in my head.

Instead of antibiotics, they prescribed antidepressants. And one specialist told me I just had to accept I was wheelchair-bound now.

I finally got treated with antibiotics because

my immune
system began
closing down.
Doctors could
see how
seriously ill
I had become,
though they

The disease had attacked my joints and soft tissues; I needed morphine

didn't think the cause was Lyme disease at this stage. I knew my life was in jeopardy and put my affairs in order.

There are many different variants of the bacteria that infected ticks spread. I had a US variant of the disease that I had unwittingly contracted on a visit to the US, which especially attacks the joints and supporting tissue.

Lyme disease requires two tests for diagnosis but it is difficult to test for. Finally, a specialist arranged for the correct blood test to be done at Porton Down, the government science and technology laboratory. It showed I had Lyme disease but the antibiotics I had been on weren't the right dose.

Through advice from Lyme Disease Action, I discovered I needed double the amount of antibiotic. They were so helpful and their Medical Director, Dr Sandra Pearson, was able to be in contact with my GP.

The result is I can now walk for 20 minutes and don't have the same degree of pain. But the disease has done terrible damage to my skeletal structure and, because it wasn't diagnosed quickly, it may recur. I am only kept going by injections of hyaluronic acid filler (used as a facial filler) into my joints.

I continued to run my business from my bed – when you employ 30 people you don't just stop, as one specialist seemed to think I would! Now I'm just hoping to recover my health sufficiently to share a future with my family. >>

"I found a tiny insect on my skin"

I ended up at

I was going to die

Jackie Barber, 51, is a civil servant and lives in Nottinghamshire. She is married with a grown-up daughter.

It all started 18 months ago with an extraordinary feeling of lethargy. It was terrifying, and felt like a wall of steel coming down, which no amount of sleep could cure.

I hadn't heard about Lyme disease in years so thought it was no longer a problem. And then last year I found a tiny insect on my skin. I didn't realise it was a tick at the time; it looked like a little red spider. I later discovered it's what is known as a "nymph tick", which is a young tick. It wasn't attached so I wasn't worried, and I didn't have any subsequent rash. Our dogs like following trails made by deer

and foxes - I think I picked it up out walking them.

It was soon after this the the emergency feeling of extreme lethargy started; it was such a shock. doctor's; I felt like I ended up in bed for a week, unable to do a thing.

Coupled with that I felt dizzy, light-headed and nauseous, and had tinnitus. With so many weird symptoms, I went to see my doctor but he had no idea what was wrong and didn't prescribe me anything.

Since then, I've had bouts of feeling OK – days, and sometimes weeks – but essentially, I haven't felt myself for 18 months and have had to take lots of leave from work. I started having memory problems, too, and was struggling to remember certain words, but I thought that must be down to my age. I have

since learned that the European variant of Lyme disease especially attacks the neurological system.

By August Bank Holiday, I was feeling dizzy again and ended up in bed with an excruciating pain in my shoulders. I began researching online, and Lyme disease crossed my mind. My symptoms seemed to match the descriptions I read.

I made another GP appointment. Meanwhile, I got in touch with Lyme Disease Action, who were incredibly helpful and told me what to ask. The doctor was sceptical at first but agreed to do the two tests required, which measure the antibodies produced in response to the infection.

While waiting for the results though

I became so ill I ended up at the emergency doctor's. This time, I honestly felt like I was going to die. The smallest of sounds – a creaky chair, say – was sending shock waves through me,

and I couldn't bear to be in daylight. Yet when the results came back, they were "satisfactory". One set was positive, while one was negative. Lyme Disease Action were again a great help - they asked for a breakdown of the results, which showed the positive test was off-the-scale positive; yet apparently both tests need to be positive for a definite diagnosis, despite having all the relevant symptoms.

Armed with this information, I saw my GP again, who agreed to get further tests from

the government's science laboratories at Porton Down. He also offered a course. of antibiotics, which I was tempted to take, but by now I knew these affect test results and I wanted to get to the bottom of what was actually wrong with me.

At the moment I'm still awaiting the test results. If I get the diagnosis and am given a month-long course of antibiotics, then I should hopefully be fine again - although I believe a late diagnosis can make recurrence a possibility. I'm also a little worried about what course of action will be taken if either of the second set of results show negative again. Although Lyme Disease Action suggested I take the course of antibiotics offered, the consultant might change his mind. If so, my battle may continue.

These past few months have been so very lonely so I'm relieved that, finally, there might now be light at the end of the tunnel.



NEED TO KNOW

 Ticks in the nymph stage are the size of a poppy seed (dog owners are used to seeing larger adult ticks). The bite is painless and they generally attach below the waist in adults and above the waist in children, especially the hairline. They pass on Lyme disease through bacteria they carry. If you find one, remove it immediately with pointed tweezers as close to the skin as possible. Keep the

tick in a container to show a doctor if necessary. You can't catch it from other people.

Possible symptoms are a flat rash that doesn't hurt or itch and expands

in a irregular circular two to 30 days after the bite, becoming pale in the centre.

One in three people don't have the rash. Other



The classic rash - but one in three don't have it

See your GP, advises Dr Sandra Pearson,

Medical Director of Lyme Disease Action, if you have the classic rash (see pic, above).

• Treatment is a course of antibiotics (a blood test isn't necessary as antibodies won't have been produced yet). If you don't have a rash but have flu-like symptoms and feel exhausted, especially outside the peak flu time, and have spent time outdoors, ask your GP about testing for Lyme disease. Be aware that false negatives are possible, especially if you've taken a short course of antibiotics for some other purpose.

Lyme Disease Action run a help desk - see lymediseaseaction.org.uk w&h

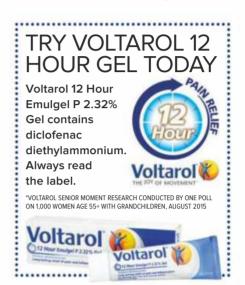
GENERATION...go for it!

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ecent research of women aged 55+*, carried out by the makers of Voltarol, found that almost one in three believe they feel ten years younger than their actual age, making them part of the "Movement Generation". Near the top of their list are activities that keep you moving, with over half of them enjoying gardening, playing with grandchildren or going out on a day trip.

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Except maybe that "ouch" of a joint pain twinge, which unfortunately does come with age. Voltarol 12 Hour Emulgel can step in to give pain relief without taking pills. Haven't tried it? Oh, do... and tell all your friends too because it can give you effective relief. Unlike tablets, Voltarol 12 Hour Emulgel concentrates relief deep in the joints, where it matters most, fighting pain and inflammation and providing concentrated relief from joint pain all day. So you can get on with living life your way.





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Editorial Director

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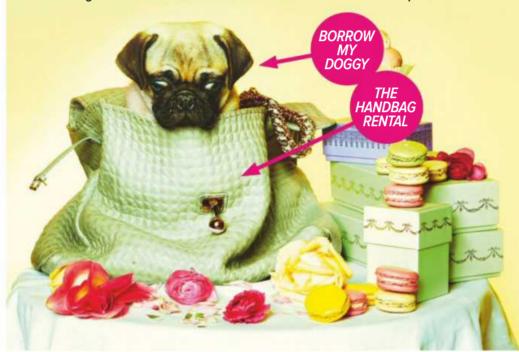




Britain's "sharing" economy is booming. Here's how you can get involved in peer-to-peer lending

ed up with spending a fortune on things you only use occasionally but still have to maintain and store, before you eventually consign them to landfill? The obvious

answer is to rent what you need, when you need it – and that's exactly what a growing number of people are doing. Conspicuous consumption is out. Collaborative consumption is in.



Style for hire

- > Clothing Need an outfit for that special do? Renting clothes, such as wedding suits, is nothing new but what has changed is that agencies now offer designer pieces. Try Girl Meets Dress (girlmeetsdress.com), Chic by Choice (chic-by-choice.com) and Dream Wardrobe (dreamwardrobe.com). Labels include Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham; expect to pay from £80.
- ➤ Accessories You could spend £1,300 on a Tom Ford saddle bag, or you could rent it for £28.50 per week, plus a £5 a month membership, from The Handbag Rental (thehandbagrental.com). Other rental "clubs" include Elite Couture (elitecouture.co.uk) and Handbags by Designers (handbagsbydesigners.co.uk).
- > Skiwear Skiwear is costly and bulky to store. Try Ski-Stuff (ski-stuff.co.uk), which rents jackets, salopettes and boots from £15 each; Ski Togs (skitogs hire.co.uk); and Snowco (snowco.co.uk), which delivers items to your ski resort.

You can even rent a dog to walk

➤ BorrowMyDoggy (borrowmydoggy. com) matches vetted dog lovers without a pet with a local dog (also fully checked out) for walks and companionship.

There's an annual membership fee of £9.99 but no "rental" charge.

Getting out and about

➤ Join a car club. Owning a car is a big expense, especially if you only drive it occasionally. The answer is to join a car share club. Clubs generally charge a fee of around £6 a month, or £60 a year, plus an hourly or daily rate of around £6 and £54 respectively. Zipcar (zipcar.co.uk) is the largest pay-as-you-drive club in the UK. Others include City Car Club (citycarclub.co.uk) and Co-wheels (co-wheels.org.uk). For something more glamorous

consider a classic car. Great Escape Cars (greatescapecars.co.uk), based in the Midlands, has 40 cars from the 50s to the 90s, from £95 a day.



IF YOU'D RATHER SOMEONE ELSE DID THE DRIVING,

particularly at this time of year, there are lots of ride-share clubs – where two or more people share a car – to choose from. Try National CarShare (nationalcarshare. co.uk) or GoCarShare (gocarshare.com) – the person getting the lift offers a contribution towards the trip.

WEB-BASED MINICAB

SERVICE Uber (uber.com) is a US import and founder member of the sharing economy. Accessed via a phone app, Uber connects passengers with CRB-checked drivers. You can see where your driver is via the app, and you pay via a registered credit card. Hailo (hailo app.com/en) operates a similar service.



'My family saves around £20,000 a year through sharing'

Benita Matofska. 48, is CEO at compareandshare. com, a comparison marketplace for the sharing economy. She lives in Brighton with her husband and two children.



"I've always been interested in the idea of sharing and renting. I've been clothes swapping for more than 20 years and when I was 19, I travelled across the US using a vehicle relocation service called Auto Driveaway.

"My husband and I share a car with the family, but I occasionally use a car club and we always use peer-to-peer websites when we travel. For borrowing household items, I use RentMyltems. I share or swap children's toys, power tools, books, food, childcare, even the dog, with friends and neighbours.

"Our family saves around £20,000 a year by sharing. That's mostly on holiday accommodation, but all the other savings do add up."

HOME SHARING

> House swapping is increasingly popular. Love Home Swap (lovehome swap.com) lets homeowners swap homes in 160 countries. Membership is from £12 a month; you can also rent for a fee plus rental cost. Home Exchange (homeexchange.com) is similar - a year's membership is £100. Alternatively, you can list and rent your home via Airbnb

> (airbnb.co.uk). Similar sites include HomeAway (homeaway.



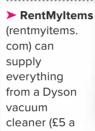
Rent-a-chore

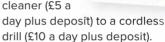
- > Trustmark (trustmark.org.uk) is a government-licensed not-for-profit organisation that helps you check out tradespeople you don't know. It has a database of more than 12.800 tradespeople across 39 trades and an excellent tips section on how to ensure they are reliable.
- ➤ **Getyourjobdone** (getyourjobdone. co.uk) puts your task, which can be anything from help moving house to assembling flat-pack furniture, out to tender and anyone matching your requirements will contact you. Tradespeople have to register and provide proof of any accreditation or qualifications and two references.
- > TaskRabbit (taskrabbit.co.uk) connects those wanting chores and jobs done with local "taskers" who are ID-verified and interviewed, plus you can view their profile and reviews. Taskers set their hourly rate (from about £15 plus a service charge). Only in London at the moment but may expand.

Need extras for Christmas guests?

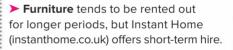
➤ Baby gear The NCT Shop (nctshop. co.uk) offers rentals of buggies and car seats – for example, a Maxi-Cosi car seat costs from £26.25 for up to six months. Also try The Baby Equipment

Hirers Association (beha.co.uk), which can find your nearest hiring company for things like cots and highchairs.





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FIND OUT MORE by reading What's Mine is Yours: How Collaborative Consumption is Changing the Way We Live by Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers.

WHAT NOT TO RENT

> We rent mobile phones, so why not laptops and tablets? Phone companies make their money on phone packages, whereas technology hire companies are principally charging for hardware. WeHireMac (wehiremac.com), for example, charges £79 per week or £199 per month for a MacBook Air - which would cost from around £1,000 to buy - so arguably the savings are not really worth it. The same applies to white goods - though if you need to rent in the short-term, there are plenty of companies that can help. Back in the day, everyone rented their TV and you still can from companies such as Boxclever (boxclever.co.uk). But unless you're obsessed with having the latest model, you're unlikely to save money by renting one. w&h



Stuck for ideas? Consumer and money expert Niki Chesworth suggests gifts with a difference that last all year or even grow for years to come

Beyond toys

If your grandchildren, godchildren or nieces and nephews already have bedrooms overflowing with plastic, you may prefer to think about a gift with a different kind of value.

RARE PRINTS From £25 upwards

Why You can enjoy looking at a framed, limited-edition print while it appreciates in value. Opt for children's prints from Lauren Child or Quentin Blake (a Roald Dahl print from *The Big Friendly Giant*, pictured below, costs around £145 mounted and framed).

For Pick a print that they will love and this is a gift for anyone – art-of-illustration.co.uk has a good selection.



FINE WINE From £40 upwards

Why Set aside for when they reach 18 and they may have a valuable bottle to sell (if not, they can always drink it). Storage is the issue, with wine merchants charging around £10 plus VAT per year per case.

For A grandchild or godchild for when they reach maturity.

Go to Berry Brothers

& Rudd, bbr.com



PREMIUM BONDS From £100

Why For the excitement of winning (or at least the possibility). Also among the few financial gifts grandparents can buy.

For Children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren — for those too young to notice there is no box to open or old enough to appreciate they have cash: nsandi.com

SAVINGS OR A JISA From £1-£4,080

Why Cash is often frittered away but a savings account grows. And if they have their own passbook, they can see their nest egg increase. Or forego the tax wrapper of a Junior ISA (they don't have to pay tax anyway) and opt for a bank account, and they can have their own cash machine card (from 11), which makes

them feel grown-up. The only snag is that accounts must be opened by a parent or guardian, so they're not easy to buy as a surprise. Barclays Plus (from £1) gives them a card so they can take up to £50 from cash machines and NatWest, which has a mobile app and online banking, also lets them decorate

their card with a photo or artwork (for £5).

Don't worry – they can't go overdrawn.

For Little ones who are too young to realise you haven't given them a toy and pre-teens upwards who like the idea of having a bank account, with a piece of plastic. Find the best buys at moneyfacts.co.uk or ask at your bank.

money matters

FIRST EDITION **BOOK** From £30 upwards

Why These can become family heirlooms and could appreciate in value. While vou may not spot the next Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone (in 1997,

only 500 hardbacks were printed for £10.99 and they're now worth £17,000 each), you can find something of lasting value. Go for rarity – a first or limited-edition, numbered or signed and quality (it will hold its value better). You can do good by buying from Oxfam (oxfam.org.uk/shop/books), where a

First edition books can heirlooms

first edition of JM Barrie's Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens was recently valued at around £800. become family Avoid buying through online auctions and instead go to reputable

> dealers such as firsts-in-print.co.uk For Children's books might be more appreciated but don't give to little ones who might scribble on them or tear the pages. Want a gift for an adult? Think about their favourite authors or hobbies. Find a list of book fairs and dealers at the Antiquarian Booksellers Association (aba.org.uk) or the Provincial Booksellers Fairs Association (pbfa.org). If you really want to push the boat out, go to peterharrington.co.uk

Members only!

Buying a year's membership to indulge their passion gives a gift that lasts all year and the enjoyment of some exclusive perks

NATIONAL ART PASS £40 under 26, £70 single, £100 couple

Why The most versatile gift membership and great value. Members benefit from free entry to over 225 museums, galleries and historic places, with 50% off exhibitions at the British Museum, National Gallery, Tate and V&A. The Art Fund gift box comes with a guide, a gift card, a subscription to Art Quarterly and an art print of your choice.

For Everyone from nieces and nephews studying art to relatives and friends of all ages who enjoy visiting galleries and museums; artfund.org

ENGLISH HERITAGE £41 student and senior, £50 adult

Why One of the best value as it offers the widest choice, with entry to 400

places including royal castles, historic gardens, forts and defences and much more. Membership also includes a handbook, members' magazine four times a year and free or reduced entry to hundreds of exciting historic events. For Great gift for families, as the holder can bring up to six children as quests free of charge; english-heritage.org.uk

TATE £70 single. £101 couple

Why Worth it for the fast-track free entry to exhibitions and amazing members' rooms (the one at Tate Modern has stunning river views). Members can take up to six children in free, and travel between Tate Modern and Tate Britain with 25% off on the Tate Boat. Members also receive 10% off at the shop

and the Tate Etc. magazine three times a year. For an extra £5 add Tate Liverpool or Tate St Ives.

For The enjoyment of four galleries in London, Liverpool or St Ives. You can also go to private events, including wine tastings and tours; tate.org.uk

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY £55

Why Great for getting in first for tickets to the Chelsea Flower Show - and early booking, discounted tickets and members' days, as well as free admission to more than 150 gardens (with a guest). Members also receive the monthly RHS magazine and access to a free gardening hotline. For Those with a passion for gardens or flower shows and anyone who wants to go to Chelsea; rhs.org.uk

5 gifts that give back

Great for stocking fillers or fun gifts to decorate the Christmas tree

HUMMING GAME, £6 (shop.mariecurie.org.uk) Great family entertainment for Christmas Day - perform for your team and guess the tune that's being hummed. All profits go towards Marie Curie's work caring for people with

terminal illnesses in their own homes.

KEEP ON

OAST IT COASTERS, £12.50 (vandashop.com)

Made with heat-resistant cork, a set of eight fun toast-shaped coasters comes packaged like a loaf of multigrain bread. Use them to protect surfaces from drinks or hot dishes, while also supporting the work of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

DIGITAL SKIPPING **ROPE, £7.50**

(giftshop.bhf.org.uk)

This skipping rope comes with a calorie and jump counter so you can track your progress and see how many calories you've burned - and 100% of the profits go to the British Heart

> Foundation to fund world-class research into cardiovascular disease.



ETER PAN FINGER PUPPETS, £20 (shop.gosh.org)

Buy these fun puppets and help the Great Ormond Street Hospital.

R2D2 MONEY TIN. £9 (shop.alzheimers.org.uk) Save money with a Star Wars robot money box and support the Alzheimer's Society too. w&h

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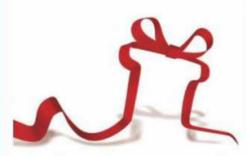
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"The stakes are high – our ham is a big part of the festive feast"

Fiona Cunningham, 50, lives in Shropshire on Maynard's Farm, which supplies hams, bacon and sausages to local Waitrose stores and farm shops. She's married to Rob, who runs the farm, and they have three children aged between 11 and 15.

We start taking Christmas orders in mid-November and then there's four to six weeks where it all goes a bit nuts. Sales for ham, chipolatas, streaky bacon and turkeys suddenly spike and we are flat out, working from 6am to 9pm until midday on Christmas Eve when the last order goes off. But that one meal is so important there's a lot of pressure to get it right.

We sell ham all year round but sales are much higher at Christmas. Our most popular ham is the treacle-cured smoked ham, which is free-range pork, brine-cured with molasses then steeped in black treacle and smoked.

We also sell uncooked hams for people to cook and glaze themselves, and bespoke hams made with dried fruit, cooked by me to order. A large eight-kilo ham sells for £100, so it's very much a Christmas treat. A smaller one costs about £7 a kilo.

We used to live in London where I ran a gym, then trained as a cordon bleu chef, and Rob was a small property developer. But we wanted to live in the country and work together, so we moved to the farm.

We don't keep pigs now – we don't have the land or the time to raise the quantity we need so we buy them from local producers. Rob does sales and

BUSINESS IN FIGURES

Turnover in first year: £100k

Turnover last year: £650k and we are hoping for the million turnover in the next two to three years.

"Christmas chocolate orders are 70 per cent of our business so it's hectic... and the internet never closes!"

Flo Broughton, 36, runs Choc on Choc, a handmade artisan chocolate brand stocked in John Lewis, Harvey Nichols, Harrods and Waitrose. The chocolate factory is in Bath, and she lives in London with her husband Michael and two children, aged two and five.

We're always busy but Christmas accounts for 70% of our sales so all of us have to go to the wire and work until Christmas Eve. We can't really stop and I'm forever thinking about chocolate although none of us can smell it any more in the factory – we're immune!

Everything is handmade, with no machines. I employ 35 people and

BUSINESS IN FIGURES

Turnover in first year: less than £100k Turnover last year: mo

Turnover last year: more than £1.1m and we are continuing to experience double digit growth.

oversee the production, the business and the finance. Our bestseller last year was our chocolate igloos, penguins and reindeer, which retails at £8.99. We become more creative each year and are always creating new ideas to stay fresh. This year our bestsellers are Christmas puddings, Santa's feet sticking out of a chimney, and a chocolate cheeseboard.

I did graphic design at university and came up with the concept of Choc on Choc with my dad. We took 12 designs to a trade show and targeted the gift market rather than the food market, and people were excited because we were different. The following year, in 2004, we made robins, snowy owls and polar bears for Emma Bridgewater to sell with her pottery. That was our first big break and the next year, we did traditional stockings and little Christmas scenes. Then John Lewis took us on, and helped us establish as a brand.

We start getting busy in September after the trade shows. Then the online

OUR CHRISTMAS IN CHOCOLATE

This Christmas we made 976,000 pieces of chocolates, which equates to 45 tonnes.

In the past year we made more than 2.7 million pieces of chocolate, which is 70 tonnes – the equivalent of ten London buses.

rush begins in October when we're getting 200 online orders a day, which goes up to 1,000 in November. But we prepare for that in the summer when we build a lot of stock. We typically take on five or six more staff members in the run-up to Christmas, which adds £4k a month extra to wages but that is our only extra seasonal cost. Despite extra staff it can be completely chaotic, as you can't stop the internet! choconchoc.co.uk

new directions

THE MAYNARD'S FARM CHRISTMAS IN NUMBERS:

Hams sold: 200 Chipolatas: 9,000 Bacon rashers: 65.000

production twice a week. I oversee the farm shop and have my own catering business but 95% of our business is wholesale.

By the time Christmas comes we're overwhelmed with relief. You'd think we'd be sick of ham but our Christmas ham is always a highlight. We have it hot, on Christmas Eve, with roasted red peppers, parsley sauce, mashed potatoes and Champagne, then on Christmas Day with turkey and a glass of fruity red.

As Christmas approaches we take on one extra member of staff, and all existing staff do much longer hours. We spend an additional £1,750 than usual on wages.

Ham over Christmas is 30 per cent of our turnover, and sales at Christmas are 40 per cent up on normal monthly sales. maynardsfarm.co.uk





"We're in the barn packing cassis orders right up to Christmas Eve"

Jo Hilditch, 51, runs British Cassis, which creates a British take on crème de cassis. It is manufactured on her family farm in Herefordshire, where she lives with her husband, lan. They have three children aged between 16 and 20.

Kir Royal is a classic Christmas and New Year drink, and in the three months before Christmas our sales go up by 25%, so it's an important time

BUSINESS IN FIGURES

Turnover in first year: £8,000 from 1,000 bottles. Turnover this year: Over £100,000 from 30,000 bottles. for us. Although we're producing all year round, we try to produce as much as we can in the summer in anticipation of increased sales. But cassis takes months to make so there's no rushing the process. Luckily, it has a decent shelf life so people can order early, which helps to calm the pre-Christmas rush.

We make the cassis in an old sheep-dipping barn and I still oversee the process although we have a production manager and two people for sales and labelling. But it's quite a skeleton team so when it gets busy, it's all hands on deck and even the kids help out - they'll be in front of the telly, constructing our branded boxes, which are a bit like origami. >>

new directions

I never planned to run our family farm — I started out working in PR. But my younger brother was tragically killed in a car crash and my father died soon afterwards. It was all very sad but led to me taking over the farm, which is a mix of arable and poultry. We grow blackcurrants for Ribena and apples for Bulmers Strongbow Cider, as well as growing supermarket broiler chickens.

The cassis actually started as an experimental side venture after we had a blackcurrant glut. It was great fun. We filled a half-tonne bin with currants and water, and got in and stamped on them before moving the juice and pulp to fermentation vats for four to six months (it's quicker in the summer). That first batch yielded 1,000 bottles. I took some to the MD of Fortnum & Mason, who took 600 bottles and "own branded" it, and we still sell to Fortnum's. This Christmas, we created little bottles for hampers. and Fortnum & Mason ordered 2,000 - but thankfully they did it early enough for us to plan. Smaller companies like local farm shops, vineyards and delis are a bit more last minute.

In the beginning we used our own blackcurrants, but now we only use them from other local farms. We also use them for the other fruit too; we now make Framboise, Poire, Fraise and Mûre, and will soon be launching British Cerise. Nothing else like this is produced in the UK, and it's different to French cassis – we use a wine-making method rather than steeping it in alcohol, so it's much more fresh and intensely fruity.

We start winding down for Christmas with a big farm party on the 20th. But we're usually packing up individual orders to go out right up until Christmas Eve, and between Christmas and New Year too. britishcassis.co.uk

A YEAR IN CASSIS

......

3 tonnes of blackcurrants are used. 30,000 bottles are sold. £300,000 sales target for 2017. 3,000,000 blackcurrants are squashed for us.

"I knocked on Lakeland's door with a basket of Christmas cakes – and they placed an order for 2,000"

Dianne Halliday, 54, runs Country Fare, which makes traditional Christmas fruit cakes using family recipes and all-natural ingredients with no additives.

She lives on a farm in Cumbria with her husband Tony, a sheep farmer, and they have three sons aged between 23 and 30.

Being from a family of farmers' wives, I've always baked. When we moved to Dalefoot Farm, I started selling at farmers' markets and I became known for my Christmas cakes.

When foot and mouth disease came along, the markets were shut so I started knocking on shop doors, which was quite scary. One of those doors was Lakeland. I went in with a basket of Christmas cakes and asked if they wanted to taste them.

As luck would have it, the buyer liked them and they placed an order of 2,000, but they sold so well it

became 3,500. I felt terrified – suddenly it wasn't just ten or 20... it was thousands, and I had to work out how to package them for mail order.

Initially we stocked Lakeland with a Glacé Fruit Cake, which is still one of their bestsellers, and this year, they ordered 15,000. Each year we are very fortunate that Lakeland takes a new product – this year it's our Hot Toddy Fruit Cake, which has fruit soaked in honey, malt whisky and orange. Luckily they place their order at Easter, and we get started immediately because Christmas cakes mature beautifully. From Easter time, I'm making cakes until 10pm. We make about 500 a day and at the busiest times I employ 16 people. We also supply Westmorland Service

.

Stations and make "own label" cakes for Blenheim Palace and upmarket delis.

By November our cakes are mostly done, and in November and December it's all about mince pies, which are handmade using my grandmother's recipe.

The day before we finish for the holiday, I make the girls a meal in my house; we have a bit of a party and wind down. country-fare.co.uk w&h

COUNTRY FARE'S CHRISTMAS CAKES AND MINCE PIES:

This year we've made 50,000 Christmas cakes and 40,000 individual mince pies.

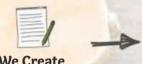


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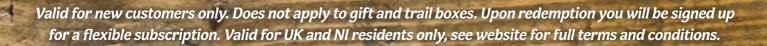
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Whether it's a little black dress moment and you fancy hosting a formal dinner party, or you just want a relaxed and casual meal for everyone to dig into, we've got it covered! COLORADES CHARLIE DICHARDS ECOR DIRECTOR JAME CHIRDAN

Cheesy gougères to serve with drinks

Savoury cheese choux pastry buns, served warm – what's not to love!

Easy/Prepare ahead/Freeze • Ready in 1 hour • Makes 30

60g butter
125g plain flour, sifted
3 free-range eggs
200g Gruyère or extra mature
Cheddar, finely grated

free-range egg yolk, to glaze YOU WILL NEED 2 baking trays lined with baking parchment; piping bag

1 For the pastry, put the butter, a pinch of salt and 200ml water in a pan. Bring to the boil, take off the heat and add the flour. Stir over a gentle heat until the mixture dries out and begins to leave the sides of the pan.

2 Take off the heat and add the eggs, one at a time, using an electric whisk. Now beat in 150g of the cheese. Heat the oven to 200C, gas 6.
3 Pipe the mix into 5-7cm rounds onto the parchment. Brush with egg yolk and scatter over the remaining cheese. Bake for 10 minutes, reduce the heat to 180C, gas 4 and bake for a further 30 minutes. Serve immediately.

GET AHEAD

Make the gougères in the morning and leave to cool, then when you're ready to serve, reheat in a hot oven for 10 minutes.

easy entertaining

Avocado mousse with fresh crab

We love a retro moment and as avocado is one of the hottest ingredients around, we've made this light, delicious mousse.

Easy/Prepare ahead
Ready in 45 minutes, plus chilling • Serves 4

3 leaves of gelatine 2 free-range egg yolks 125g crème fraîche 2 ripe avocados 2tbsp fresh lime juice Tabasco sauce
150g fresh white crab meat,
wasabi paste and thin
toasts, to serve
YOU WILL NEED
4 dariole moulds or similar,
around 90ml capacity,
lightly oiled

1 Soak the gelatine in cold water and set aside. Whisk the egg yolks with an electric whisk until pale then scald the crème fraîche in a pan and pour onto the egg yolks, whisking all the time. Squeeze the gelatine of excess water and add to the egg mix, whisking well. Leave to cool.

2 Purée the avocado in a blender with the lime juice and a few shakes of Tabasco. Add salt and pepper then check the seasoning. Whisk the 2 mixtures together. Pour into the moulds and cover tightly with clingfilm. Leave in the fridge for at least 2 hours.

3 To serve, run a flat-bladed knife around the edge then tip out onto serving plates. Serve the crab, wasabi and toasts on the side with a dusting of paprika or cayenne pepper. >>

GET AHEAD

You can make the mousse the day before. The avocado may discolour slightly, though the taste won't be affected.

woman&home A RRAND NEW ATTITUDE 137



Duck with pomegranate and walnuts

This combination of flavours is a Middle Eastern classic and rightly so, with its sweet and sour taste and crunch from the nuts.

🌠 🥮 Easy/Prepare ahead

- Ready in 1 hour
- Serves 4

200g walnut pieces
2tbsp olive oil
2 large red onions, sliced
4 duck breasts
100g pomegranate molasses
200ml rich chicken stock
4tbsp chopped flat-leaf
parsley
4tbsp pomegranate seeds

1 Fry the walnuts for a few minutes in 1tbsp hot olive oil

until crisp, then set aside on kitchen paper. Fry the onions for a few minutes until coloured. Set a quarter of both of these aside for later. 2 Make small slashes in the duck fat but not the skin. Season well all over. Heat the remaining oil in a deep sauté pan and brown the fat until crispy. Set aside. Return the onions and walnuts to the pan. Add the molasses and chicken stock, bring to the boil then simmer gently. 3 Return the duck to the pan flesh side down then cover and simmer for about 30 minutes until the duck is tender. Take out the duck (you may want to flash the skin under the

GET AHEAD You can mak

grill to crisp it up). Reduce

the sauce until thickened

slightly. Stir in the parsley.

Slice the duck and spoon

the reserved nuts, onions

We served our duck with

orange segments and

pomegranate seeds.

basmati rice to which we

added chopped pistachios,

over the sauce. Scatter over

and the pomegranate seeds.

You can make the recipe up to 3 hours ahead then simply reheat the duck under the grill, reheat the sauce and microwave the rice.

The sweet and sour pomegranate molasses adds depth and richness to this dish. Try it in marinades and salad dressings too

Quince and frangipane tart

If you are unable to find quince, then try this recipe with pears poached in mulled wine. Just as delicious!

Easy/Prepare ahead
Ready in 2 hours • Serves 8

375g shortcrust pastry
5tbsp quince jelly or apricot
jam, to glaze
FOR THE QUINCE
500g caster sugar
1 lemon
6 quince
FOR THE FRANGIPANE
125g butter

150g caster sugar 200g ground almonds 2 free-range eggs YOU WILL NEED a 22cm fluted, loose-based flan tin, lightly oiled; foil and baking beans

1 First, poach the quince. Put 1 litre water into a large saucepan together with the caster sugar. Peel the lemon and add the peel, juice and the remaining lemon to the pan. Heat until the sugar has dissolved. Peel then halve the quince and as you finish one,

pop it into the syrup to prevent discolouring. Gently poach for about 1 hour or until tender, putting a piece of greaseproof paper on top to help keep them submerged.

2 Use the pastry to line the tin, leaving a good overlap. Chill for 20 minutes then heat the oven to 200C, gas 6 and bake blind for 20 minutes or until golden. Reduce the oven to 180C, gas 4.

3 Make the frangipane by putting all the ingredients into a food processor and blend well. Spoon into the pastry

case then arrange the slices of cooked quince neatly over the surface. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until the filling is risen and golden. Leave to cool for 15 minutes in the tin. Gently heat the quince jelly then brush over the tart before serving with crème fraîche or ice cream.

GET AHEAD You can poach the quince in advance – they will keep in their syrup for 3 days in a sealed container in the fridge and any leftovers are fabulous served with ice cream or yogurt.



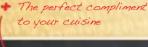




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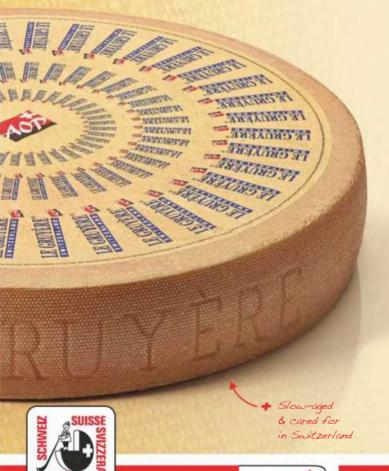
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For more information about Gruyère AOP, visit us at gruyere.com



AOP = PDO (Protected Designation of Origin)







Focaccia with red onions and figs

The bread mix we used will actually make two focaccia so you can always make two and freeze one without the figs (which don't freeze well).

Easy/Prepare Ahead • Ready in 2 hours • Serves 8

1/2 x 500g pack ciabatta bread mix (we used Wright's) 1tbsp olive oil, plus extra to drizzle 100g caramelised onions (from a jar) 2 fresh figs, quartered 75g soft goats' cheese

1 Mix the ciabatta dough according to the pack instructions, adding 1tbsp olive oil, then bring the dough together with your hands and form into a ball. Knead for 10 minutes on a floured surface, until smooth and elastic. 2 Transfer to a large, clean, oiled bowl, cover with clingfilm and leave in a warm place to rise for 1 hour. When the dough has doubled in size, remove from the bowl: knead on a floured surface for 5 minutes, to knock the air out of it. 3 Heat the oven to 200C, gas 6. Roll out the dough into a rough circle just under 2cm thick, and transfer to an oiled baking tray. Cover loosely with clingfilm and leave in a warm place to prove for 20 minutes, until the dough has puffed up slightly again. Press your fingertips into the dough to form indentations, scatter over the onions, figs and goats' cheese. Bake on the top shelf of the oven for 25 minutes, until golden. Tap the

base – if it sounds hollow, it's cooked. **Serve the foccacia with...**

Slow-baked tomatoes

Halve some tomatoes, put on baking trays then scatter over a sugar/sea salt mix made of double quantity sugar to salt. Put in a preheated 130C, gas ½ oven for 3 hours. Store in extra virgin olive oil in the fridge for up to a week.

Green olive tapenade

Real tapenade is very moreish! This produces quite a large amount but it's fiddly to make a small portion. Keep in the fridge in a sealed container for up to a week and use another day.

Easy/Prepare Ahead • Ready in 20 minutes

2 garlic cloves, peeled juice and grated zest of 1 lemon 2tbsp non-pareille capers 6 anchovy fillets in olive oil, drained 400g pitted green olives, drained 100ml extra virgin olive oil

Put everything except the oil into a food processor and whizz until chunky. Slowly add the olive oil on pulse. You don't want a purée but a chunky paste.

Slow-cooked oxtail

The ultimate in slow-cooking – make it a day or two ahead of time to help the rich, deep flavours to develop.

Easy/Prepare Ahead/Freeze
Ready in 4 hours • Serves 8

2.5kg oxtail pieces
6tbsp seasoned flour
4tbsp oil
2 large onions, sliced
2 garlic cloves, crushed
4 celery sticks, chopped
3tbsp good-quality red wine vinegar
75cl bottle red wine
500ml strong beef stock (we used
2 Knorr rich beef stock pots)
4 fresh bay leaves (or 2 dried)

peel and juice of 1 orange 150g smoked bacon lardons or pancetta cubetti 200g button mushrooms

1 This is best started the day before vou want to eat the casserole. Heat the oven to 150C, gas 2. Toss the oxtail lightly in the flour. Heat a large, lidded casserole, add 2tbsp of the oil, and fry the oxtail until browned on all sides. Set aside. Add 1tbsp of oil and gently fry the onions, garlic and celery for a few minutes without colouring. Add any remaining flour to the pan and cook for 2 minutes, then add the vinegar, oxtail, wine, stock, bay, orange peel and juice to the pan, bring to a gentle simmer, stir and put in the oven with a lid on to cook for 3 hours 30 minutes. 2 The oxtail should be falling off the bone and the sauce will be thick. Allow the casserole to cool completely (overnight in the fridge is best), then skim off the thick layer of fat that will have hardened on top. Half an hour before serving, heat the remaining oil in a frying pan. Cook the lardons until crispy, then cook the mushrooms and add to the oxtail. Bring to the boil then simmer until fully heated through.

COOK'S TIP

If you prefer, you can take the oxtail off the bone once it has fully cooked through. To add extra depth of flavour, add 2 squares of dark chocolate (at least 80% cocoa solids) with the wine.

It won't taste of chocolate but it does add a certain richness! >>





Homemade "Nutella" pie

This needs to be sliced straight from the fridge then served cold though you can let it sit for ten minutes or so. When sliced warm, the filling would just ooze everywhere!

Easy/Prepare ahead
Ready in 2 hours, plus
chilling • Serves 8-10

200g whole hazelnuts, toasted 200g butter, diced 200g light muscovado sugar 2 free-range eggs plus 1 freerange egg yolk, to glaze 75g plain flour 1tbsp cocoa powder 100g dark chocolate, finely chopped 500g all-butter puff pastry

1 Whizz the hazelnuts in a food processor until finely chopped but not a powder. Set aside then whizz together the butter, sugar, eggs, flour and cocoa powder. Put into a bowl, stir through the chocolate then put in the fridge while you roll out the pastry. 2 Halve the pastry and roll each piece to 5mm thick. Cut out 2 circles - the first one about 20cm in diameter and the other one 1-2cm bigger. Put the smaller circle onto a lightly greased baking tray. Heat the oven to 200C, gas 6.

3 Pile the hazelnut filling into the centre of the smaller circle. Leave 5cm around the outside. Beat the egg yolk and brush around the edge of the circle. Carefully put the other pastry circle on top Using a fork, firmly press round the edges. You can score the rest of the pastry in fine lines with a flat-bladed knife or decorate as you wish. Glaze all over, then rest in the fridge for 30 minutes. 4 Bake for 45 minutes or until golden all over. Allow to cool, then put in the fridge for at least 4 hours to firm up the filling. Slice and serve with your favourite ice cream. >>



A scoop of pistachio ice cream goes perfectly with this nutty pie, or serve with brandy sauce



Best ever cheeseboard

Blue cheese

There's a blue to suit all tastes. Colston Bassett Stilton has won more awards than you can shake a stick at! This dairy has had only four cheesemakers in the past 100 years. It's a rich and creamy Stilton. The same dairy makes Shropshire Blue, which is milder but has a luscious, creamy taste. Over to France, Fourme d'Ambert is from the Auvergne region. It is one of the milder of the blue cheeses, with a soft, creamy texture. You could also try creamy Gorgonzola or lighter Dolcelatte.

Hard cheese

Montgomery Cheddar is unpasteurised, which contributes to its earthy, rich flavour. The milk is from their own herd in Somerset, and Montgomery is one of the last few truly traditional Cheddars made today. Ossau Iraty is made from unpasteurised sheep's milk in the Basque region of the French Pyrenees. It's a nutty, delicate semi-hard cheese. If your memories of Gouda hark back to the rubbery, orange cheese of 70s' diets, forget them and try an Aged Gouda, which is a three-year-old unpasteurised cheese with nutty, caramel complex flavours. You may also like Sainsbury's Welsh Slate Cavern Aged Cheddar from their Taste the Difference range on the cheese counter. It's a rich, creamy cheese with a moderately strong flavour. The "Cavern" in the title is a former slate mine in Wales where the cheese is matured.

Soft and washed rind cheese

Our top pick from British soft cheeses is award-winning Tunworth, handmade by Stacey Hedges in Hampshire. It's often called a "British Camembert" but it's a star in its own right – soft, creamy, nutty, with a fine, wrinkled rind. The Champagne region of France produces Langres, a soft cheese with a distinctive

dip in the top where the cheesemakers would pour their local fizz or Marc de Champagne, a grappa-type liqueur with a big kick! It has a strong aroma with a spicy tang. You may also like Brillat-Savarin, named after the famous gourmand, which is very rich and creamy, or Vacherin Mont d'Or, only made in the winter – it's soft, creamy and full-flavoured, traditionally served with a spoon rather than a knife!

Goats' cheese

Bosworth Leaf goats' cheese is made in Shropshire and is aged for three weeks with a distinctive lemon flavour, not too strong, not too mild. It's wrapped in a chestnut leaf, which makes it so pretty on the cheeseboard. The Castilla y León region of Spain makes Monte Enebro. It can be aged for up to three months so as it ages, it develops quite a strong bite, with a rich and creamy texture. If you like your goats' cheese with a stronger kick, you could try Ragstone, made in Herefordshire, which is aged for a bit longer so has more depth of flavour, or the famous Crottin de Chavignol from Sancerre, which again becomes more pronounced in flavour as it ages. This little cheese is perfect for grilling for a salad too.

WHERE TO BUY

If you aren't lucky enough to have a good, local cheese shop, here are some excellent shops where you can order online:

Paxton & Whitfield
paxtonandwhitfield.co.uk
Teddington Cheese
teddingtoncheese.co.uk
The Courtyard Dairy
thecourtyarddairy.co.uk
Neal's Yard Dairy
nealsyarddairyshop.co.uk
The Fine Cheese Co.
finecheese.co.uk

Water biscuits

Serve your cheese selection with these biscuits – they couldn't be simpler to make and will keep for up to 3 days in an airtight container.

Easy/Prepare Ahead/Freeze
Ready in 30 minutes • Makes around 16

200g plain flour 1tsp baking powder 50g butter sea salt

Put all the ingredients except the salt into a food processor and whizz. Add a little water so that it forms a dough — 2-3tbsp. Roll out thinly and cut out shapes. Heat the oven to 200C, gas 6. Brush with a little water, sprinkle over sea salt and bake on a greased baking tray for 15-20 minutes until golden.

WHAT TO DRINK

Let's dismiss first off the adage that red wine and port are to be drunk with cheese – wrong! Well sort of... hard cheeses and strong blues such as Stilton are great with reds and port, but also with some of our finest British

ales. If you're eating goats' cheese, a crisp Sauvignon
Blanc would be better. In fact, white wines are much better with soft and washed rind cheeses, which are on the milder side, as are dry ciders. Younger, soft blue cheeses are delicious with fizz – just try Prosecco with Gorgonzola! And a

sweeter fizz such as Asti is delicious with aged Parmesan. If you like a "sticky" or dessert wine, they go brilliantly with blue cheese too. So if you're trying new cheeses, have a go at some new drinks pairings too! w&h



DOKE Find more ideas for your festive cheeseboard at womanandhome.com/cheeseboard

Nigel Slater's new cheesecake!

For all dessert lovers, try a slice of heaven from Nigel's fabulous new book...

he older I get the more
I like clean, bright
flavours. The fresh
astringent notes
of ginger, lemon,
pomegranate and passion fruit.
The bite of yuzu and vinegar. The
cool, ice-crisp notes of mint and lime,
white grapefruit and soy. The sort of
flavours that quicken your heart rate
rather than slow your pulse.

And yet, there is much pleasure to be found in the occasional wodge of claggy cheesecake. A cake to slow your pace. Cream cheese, Nutella, chocolate. The sort of stuff that lands on both plate and palate with a dull thud.

Cloying foods have a comfort-blanket quality. Tahini, the sesame paste the colour of a Cotswold barn, has enough 'cloy and clag' to glue anyone's lips together. Peanut butter is the sweet version, a paste to coat your mouth like a melted Milky Bar. Dulce de leche, the creamy caramel spread found sandwiched between the shortcake and chocolate of a millionaire's shortbread, is at the decadent end. KitKat the other. (Less so if, like me, you keep your KitKats in the fridge.)

So, a recipe for the mother of all cheesecakes, a gift to those of us who understand the need for an occasional slice of rib-sticking cake. A nutty, chocolatey, cream-cheese-laden slice of heaven. For those who understand.

Chocolate peanut butter cheesecake

This is a very softly set, gooey cheesecake, so don't expect to get neat slices from it. It is possibly the richest thing you could ever eat, so serve it in small amounts. It is essential to keep it in the fridge overnight, so start the day before.

FOR THE BASE

butter – 75g dark chocolate digestives – 175g salted roasted peanuts – 100g FOR THE FILLING

dark chocolate – 100g
full-fat cream cheese – 450g
eggs – 4
an extra egg yolk
caster sugar – 120g
vanilla extract – a teaspoon
crunchy peanut butter – 100g

YOU WILL NEED

a 20cm springform cake tin

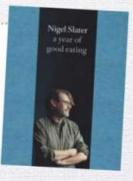
1 Melt the butter in a small pan.
Blitz the digestive biscuits in a food processor or put them in a plastic bag and bash them to large crumbs with a rolling pin. Tip the crumbs into the melted butter. Process the peanuts to a coarse powder in the food processor, then stir them into the mixture. Tip the mixture into the cake tin and smooth flat, but without compacting the crumbs. Place in the fridge to set.
2 Set the oven at 160°C/Gas 3.
Break the chocolate into small pieces,

2 Set the oven at 160°C/Gas 3.
Break the chocolate into small pieces, then melt it in a bowl over a pan of simmering water. Do not stir, but push

any unmelted chocolate down into the liquid chocolate with a spoon. The less you stir, the less likely it is to 'seize'. Put the cream cheese, eggs, egg yolk, caster sugar and vanilla into the bowl of a food mixer and beat slowly till thoroughly mixed.

- 3 Wrap the base of the cake tin in two layers of kitchen foil so no water can get in as it cooks. Pour the cream cheese filling on to the biscuit base. Pour the melted chocolate on next, then spoonfuls of peanut butter at regular intervals. Using a skewer or the handle of a spoon, swirl the chocolate and peanut butter throughout the cream cheese mixture.
- 4 Put the cake into a roasting tin and pour in hot water to come halfway up the sides of the tin. Bake in the oven for fifty-five to sixty minutes. The cake should still wobble in the centre. Leave it in a little longer if necessary, covering with foil to stop the top colouring.
- **5** Remove the cake from the oven and let it cool in the roasting tin of water. Transfer to the fridge and leave overnight or for at least seven hours. Serves at least 8.

Taken from A Year of Good Eating: The Kitchen Diaries III by Nigel Slater (Fourth Estate)



There is much pleasure to be found in a wodge of claggy cheesecake. The sort of stuff that lands on both plate and palate with a dull thud



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PHOTOGRAPH GETTY IMAGE



A sparkling Christmas!

Tim Atkin MW pops the best bubbles for the festive season

I can't get enough of bubbles at this time of year. Oh all right then, at any time of year. There's something about the ritual of opening a bottle of fizz – the twist of the cork, the gentle release of pressure, the mousse frothing in the glass - that lifts my spirits.

And then there are the wondrous aromas teased out of the grapes as the base wine turns from tart, lemony juice to a toasty elixir. The leading sparkling wine makers are modern-day alchemists.

Drinking Champagne and other sparkling wines is a must at Christmas and New Year, whether it's for aperitifs, lunches, parties or simply fireside relaxation. With these scenarios in mind, I always buy several different bubblies, covering various price points and styles. Let's face it, you don't want to pour vintage Champagne for the neighbours, just as you wouldn't spoil your family with Prosecco or Cava.

Good sparkling wine starts at around £7 - although you may find cheaper things on the shelf - with Cava, Prosecco and French Crémants your best bet. But you don't have to spend a fortune to drink decent Champagne. I've picked two, a non-vintage and a 2006 vintage, that will do very nicely,

thank you. And if you want something that sits in the middle, price-wise, the Graham Beck bubbly is a stunner.



2012 Philippe **Michel Crémant** du Jura (£7.29, 12%, Aldi) Trust good old Aldi to track down this brilliant-value fizz from eastern France, made entirely from the Chardonnay grape. Spicy, savoury and bone dry, it has notes of oatmeal and citrus, and refreshing bubbles.



Waitrose Prosecco NV (£7.49, 11%) Frothy, aromatic and full of peach, pear and apple fruit, as all good Prosecco should be, this is just off-dry, but has enough acidity to balance the sweetness. A great party fizz that's equally tasty in a Buck's Fizz.



Cava Heretat El Padruell Brut NV (£8, 11.5%, Marks & Spencer) Made from the three classic Cava grapes (Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada) rather than blended with Chardonnay, this non-vintage fizz is smoky, mineral and dry, with tapering bubbles and a long, satisfying finish.



WINETIP

WINE OF

THE MONTH

2014 Hey Malbec!

Matías Riccitelli.

Mendoza (£9.99.

14.5%, Majestic)

You've only got to

take a look at the

superhero label

youthful Matías

Riccitelli takes a

slightly different

approach to marketing

and making wines. This is a wonderfully aromatic red, with notes of violets

and blackberries, subtle

vanilla oak and a spicy,

plushly textured finish.

to realise that the

Most vintages vary considerably around the world. But 2010, a bit like 1990, was good almost everywhere, just as 2013 seemed to be tricky in most of the major wine regions. So if you see a 2010 on a retail shelf or a restaurant list, you should be in very good shape. Think twice about those 2013s, though.

2010 Graham Beck The Rhona Blanc de Blancs, Robertson (£13, 12%, Marks

& Spencer) Pieter "Bubbles" Ferreira is the best sparkling winemaker in South Africa and a leading specialist in the Southern Hemisphere. This all-Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs is a refined delight worth twice its price tag



Tesco finest* **Premier Cru Champagne Brut NV** (£19.99, 12.5%) Consistently one of the best own-label Champagnes in the high street, this blend of Chardonnay with 30% Pinot Noir is surprisingly rich and nutty for a nonvintage style. The half bottles at £10 are a guilty treat.



2006 Les Pionniers Vintage Champagne (£24.99, 12%, The Co-operative) Régis Camus of Piper and Charles Heidsieck is the winemaker responsible for this brilliant own-label from The Co-op. A blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, it's toasty, complex and multi-layered, with very fine, pinhead bubbles.

It's not just the supermarkets that sell own-label wines these days. Majestic and Berry Bros & Rudd have both launched bespoke ranges in the past few months, the former under the Definition label, the latter as a more extensive Own Selection. The Berry line-up is especially good from Burgundy, Bordeaux and

Champagne. w&h

WINE NEWS





FOOD edit The best of CHRISTIMAS

Be inspired by our pick of the most delicious festive foods, from storecupboard to spectacular



TASTY CANAPES

Brindisa are the masters of all foods Spanish. Team their **Ibérico Ham Platter** (£18.95, Ocado) with pitted green **Perello Gordal Pitted Olives** (£2.25, Ocado). **Lidl Sliced and Smoked Reindeer** (£4.99) and **Beef Carpaccio with Olive Oil and Cheese** (£2.79) are a good choice too. **Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Scottish Salmon and Scallop Tartlets** (2 for £3.75) would make a deliciously simple starter.

SPECIAL SHELLFISH

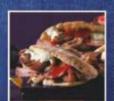
There is a great selection around this year. Lidl are doing frozen Dressed Crab (130g, £2.99).

Try Aldi Specially Selected Succulent Rock Lobster Tails (240g, £9.99) and Morrisons M Signature Dressed Lobster (serves 2 for £12). To wow guests, M&S win hands down with Smoked Salmon Pearls (4 for £12) – smoked salmon and lemon mousse dusted with silver lustre and served in scallop shells.



THROWING A PARTY?

Make life easier and buy some delicious canapés to serve alongside your homemade ones (see our recipe ideas at womanandhome.com/partyfood)



Asda Extra Special Lamb Kebabs (£4) are meaty and substantial, and their mini Coquilles St Jacques are delicious (£4).



M&S as always have new and exciting ones like Ham Fritters with Cheese Fondue Sauce (12 for £6) and Mini Lobster Mac and Cheese (10 for £10).



For something sweet, Tesco frozen 12
Chocolate-filled Churros with cinnamon sugar (£2) are a steal and really crispy, as they should be.



Co-op's 12-piece steamed Dim Sum Collection (£4) would make a good, cheeky starter too!

We really enjoyed Heston from Waitrose Lapsang Souchong Tea Smoked Salmon, which has a delicate flavour (£4.99/100g)



THEMAINEVENT

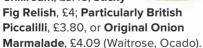
Free Range Bronze
Turkeys from the Copas
family estate roam among
maize and cherry trees,
and are fed a natural diet
to develop a beautiful
layer of fat beneath the
skin. The Rolls-Royce of
turkeys and well worth the
price; copasturkeys co.uk.
And for the best gravy,
we love Heston from
Waitrose Turkey, Sage
& Onion Gravy (£2.69).

MORE MEAT. PLEASE!

Our other favourites this year are: Tesco 21 Day Matured Beef Rib Joint, which is well priced and deliciously tender, £9.50/kg, and Tesco Finest*
Sugar and Spice Baking Ham (£16/kg). Aldi Three Game Roast – guinea fowl, grouse and pheasant, topped with bacon and with a pork stuffing – is something quite different (1kg, £12.99). Lidl are selling East Anglian Free-Range Goose for an amazing £35.99 for 4.5kg – it gives you wonderful fat for your roast spuds. For a change, try Asda Extra Special Stuffed Venison Joint, wrapped in streaky bacon with a winter fruit stuffing (740g, £20).



Christmas food always needs a relish, so it's Tracklements to the rescue with their award-winners! Take your pick from: Fresh Chilli Jam, £3.45; Sticky

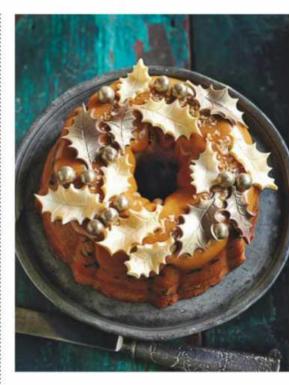


FOR VEGGIES

Asda Spiced Pumpkin, Cranberry and Pecan Loaf (£2.28) is a tasty option to turkey; just serve with all the trimmings.







OUR PICK OF THE PUDS

Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Sticky Toffee and Pecan Bundt Cake is a sugar hit at £12. Tesco wins a gong for its rich Finest* Christmas Pudding (907g, £10). We fell in love with the gorgeous Candle Wreath Dessert from M&S (£15), a white chocolate candle surrounded by chocolate mousse spheres filled with raspberry sauce and scattered with gold lustre. New too, this year, is the M&S Collection Christmas Star (£15), the lemon curd and limoncello mousse is deliciously tangy. Heston came up trumps with his fun **Chocolate & Passion Fruit Mini** Popping Candy Bites (Waitrose, £5.99). Co-op Truly Irresistible Millionaire's Salted Caramel Dessert (£5.99) is a hit and we love Asda **Extra Special Black Forest** Alaska Bombe (£5) too.

DRINKS

For something new to drink, Tesco Finest* Sloe Gin (70cl, £16) is a winner on its own or topped up with Cava. The Spiced Clementine Gin from M&S (50cl, £13) with cardamom, cloves and cinnamon, will be a winter hit served over ice. w&h



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Visit our Comfort Station™ Adaptive in store or book an appointment online at bensonsforbeds.co.uk.





Welcome to our home

Set a festive scene as friends and family come over

PRETTY GROUP Simple flowering plants are really welcome at this time of year. Start with terracotta pots, which can be found easily – you may even have some in the garden left over from summer. Paint them white – emulsion will be fine and you'll get a nice, chalky finish. Plant them up and add silver glitter on the top for a sparkly, festive touch, then scatter more glitter around the pots. Finish by adding foliage and tea lights.

It's the first thing people see when they come to your home, so make your entrance as welcoming and appealing as you can





HALL STORY Set the scene by dressing your hallway. A fresh floral arrangement looks and smells wonderful. Here, fresh green and white have been used in an antique-style urn. An antique mirror behind the arrangement will reflect light back into the hall. Instead of a wreath outside, place it inside the door and use the same colours to tie the scheme together.



FIND FAUX MISTLETOE AT BLOOM.UK.COM

THE BONUS

IT'S A WRAP Weave a garland around a newel post or drape along the banister. Take a real one as a base then add decorations. This one begins with a strand of eucalyptus and deep blue thistle heads, then faux silver berries and pears, tinsel and sprayed fir cones have been added.



wHITE MAGIC Give your wall lights a festive touch with paper pom-poms hanging at different levels, and tie with jolly red and white ribbon – so easy!

HANG IT UP Place a cheeky bunch of mistletoe in the hallway to catch guests as they come in. For a fun tip, clip special Christmas cards into it. >>

Fabulous flowers It's easy to create a showstopping floral tablecentre





CENTRE STAGE

Place hydrangea and chrysanthemum flower heads into Oasis in a glass vase, tie the vase with ribbon and add thin taper candles.

SQUARED UP Fill a square tank vase with the same coloured baubles, then tie with sheer ribbon like a parcel. A simple floral arrangement adds height and interest.

VINTAGE VIBE Place votive holders filled with water and flower heads on a tiered cake stand. Add similar-coloured baubles and other small decorations.

REPEAT, REPEAT

Choose three or five of the same type of vase, fill with the same flowers, such as red and white amaryllis, tie with the same ribbon and place in a row.





THE BONUS



SO SIMPLE This idea couldn't be easier. Place a selection of baubles in a row along the mantelpiece. You may need to anchor them with Blu-tack or double-sided tape (attach where it can't be seen). Then at intervals, place glass votive holders preferably patterned ones - and the odd table jewel or tiny bauble. Perfect!

SPARKLE AND SHINE Hang a pearl wreath on a mirror and add different-sized silver or glass candlesticks, pretty foliage and battery-operated fairy lights.



YOU CAN TRY THESE IDEAS ON A CONSOLE TABLE TOO

BERRY RED Create a simple festive display on one or both ends of the mantelpiece, keeping to just one colour, such as deep red. >>

GREEN AND FRESH Pillar candles look great in a row, interspersed with white flowers, such as amaryllis or lilies, with ivy strands trailing in front.



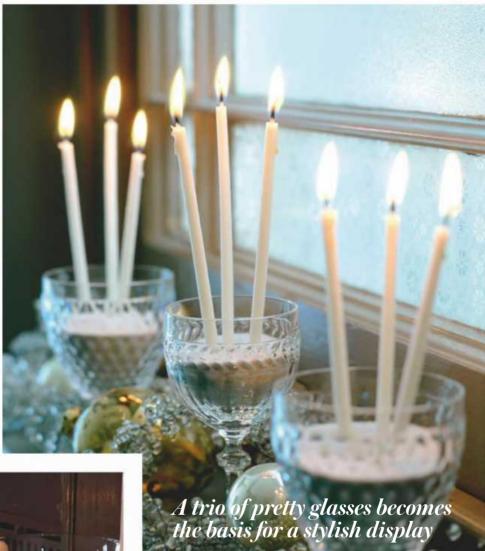
Along the mantel

Go for all-out glamour and dress your mantelpiece to impress

Classy canales Create a warming atmosphere with a pretty glow

CENTRE STAGE Using a garden trough as part of a table candle centrepiece means it can be easily lifted off the table when the food arrives. Place pillar candles equally and surround with moss.







SO COSY This is perfect for a fireplace or hearth if you don't have an open fire. Group together different-sized pillar candles, add a couple of hurricane lanterns and dot through with baubles and pine cones.

THREE'S COMPANY

Pour some sand into three glasses then push three white taper candles into each one. Drape a beaded garland or fairy lights around the glasses and add a few shiny baubles.

FIND PRETTY ANTIQUE TRAYS IN JUNK SHOPS OR ON EBAY

BRING NATURE IN Place pillar candles on antique-style trays. Tie on ivy leaves with baker's string, and arrange decorative pebbles or small baubles around the base.

LANTERN LOVE Place pillar candles, votives or tea lights into a large glass lantern and add foliage, baubles or berries.



THE BONUS

8 Festive home fragrances





Soulful Room Mist, £20, aroma-works.com

Winter Spruce Fragranced Luxury Diffuser, £16, next.co.uk





Scented "Joy" candle, £65, amouage.com



Box of four festive-fragranced votives, £39.95, branche-dolive.com



Dark Patchouli Pot Pourri, £7, marksandspencer.com



Fir & Berry Large Botanical Candle, £35, thewhitecompany.com







Guests can really enjoy a leisurely meal in these supercomfortable dining chairs MAKE IT RELAXING The Quinns have opted for comfortable upholstered dining chairs. A classic wooden table is wide enough for all the place settings and centrepiece, covered with a large white runner. Candlesticks

your home your way





Clever finds that would fit in perfectly with a classy, elegant look...

cool grey A glass lamp with a pale grey shade is timeless. Clara table light, £90, bhs.co.uk

in different sizes make a simple tablecentre.

FRINGE EDGE Add texture and warmth to a living room. Herringbone throw, £70, houseoffraser.co.uk

FROSTED FINISH

Add a hint of sparkle.
Silver pine cone wreath,
£30, debenhams.com

SPELL IT OUT Simple wooden letters that say the right thing! £9.50 per letter, poshgraffiti.co.uk

STYLE AND COMFORT

Add elegance with new chairs. Flynn Scoop Back Chair in Persian Grey, £139, made.com

SIMPLE CHIC

For a sophisticated feel, dress a tree with white and silver decs. From £1.50 each, sainsburys.co.uk >>>



My French-style CHRISTIMAS

Maddy and Richard Ford lived in France before returning to the UK, and have brought classic French style with them. A grey and white colour scheme with a shabby chic vibe is a good base to add some festive red



MANTELPIECE DETAIL

Maddy has pinned on a simple string garland with red wooden hearts and stars on it, anchored by candlesticks on each side. She has added quirky decorations to stand on the mantelpiece, which she bought in France. Votive holders in different shapes and sizes add a warm glow, then as a finishing touch, Maddy has draped ivy from the garden along the mantelpiece.



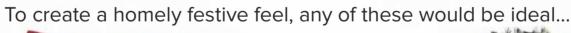




KEEP IT SIMPLE When the rest of the house is decorated lavishly, sometimes it's nice to keep it simple when you sit down to eat. Start with a plain white tablecloth then add white china and clear glasses. An unfussy tablecentre finishes off the look perfectly.

elieve it or not, this cosy home is brand new! Sue and Gary Reeve wanted a traditional farmhouse feel – and they made sure they achieved it. It looks perfect dressed at Christmas with the log-burning fire, exposed brick and wooden floors – and red folk-inspired accessories really set the scene.





LIGHT BY LANTERN
A few rustic lanterns
create a lovely, warm glow.

£15.99, dobbies.com

Throw a Christmas cushion or two onto your sofa for

CUTE CUSHIONS

the festive season.

SILVER TOUCH A

pre-lit wreath for your front door, or above a fireplace. Silver wreath, £25.98,

Reindeer, £5, wilko.com amazon.co.uk

TABLE TALK A solid oak coffee table will last forever – good-sized drawers help hide clutter. Classic oak table, £329, hampshirefurniture.co.uk

fireside essential. Bucket, £16.55, romanathome.com

COAL

SOFA WORKSHOP

individual sofas, for individuals

At Sofa Workshop, we've been on a mission to make the world a more comfortable place for nearly 30 years. Our range has over 56 highly customisable designs with everything from timeless classics to contemporary cool, and they're all handmade to order right here in Britain. Also, don't miss our new season fabrics in store - beautiful secret garden inspired florals, rich jewel-toned velvets and the softest of linens.

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Interest free finance is available on orders of £500 and over. No deposit with 4 years interest free credit. Representative example £1000 cash price. No deposit with 48 equal payments of £20.83. Total amount payable £1000.0% typical APR.

All credit is subject to acceptance. Credit is provided by Barclays Partner Finance. Sofa Workshop head office: 2nd floor, Mill Pool House, Mill Lane, Godalming, GU7 1EY.

SWEET TREATS

Keep the kids

– and adults –
quiet with a box
of goodies!
Christmas
crate, £29.95,
plantabox.co.uk



CREATE A GLOW With this beautiful stag candle. Broste deer candle in copper, £7.95, scandinavianshop.co.uk

LOVELY PLACE SETTING

To show you care. Christmas heart place mat, £1.75, dotcomgiftshop.com

STYLISH SIGN

Hang by the front door to welcome friends. Personalised hanging slate sign, £12.99, gettingpersonal.co.uk



NICE MESSAGE

insle in a Tangle

A fun plate for the special day, £4.99, hm.com

CHRISTMAS GOODIES. no home can be without

Don't forget your home this Christmas when you're giving out gifts. It's the one time of year when you can treat yourself to a bit of kitsch!



CHRISTMAS STORAGE

Keep all your baked goodies in this set of 3 festive Christmas Joy cake tins, £34, emmabridgewater.co.uk





SO HANDY Brighten up the kitchen with a Christmas Delights oven mitt, £14.95, victoriaeggs.co.uk

TEA FOR TWO Begin the day with a cup of tea with your loved one. Happy Christmas mugs, from £13.50 each, cornishware.co.uk

seasonal buys

REINDEER FRIEND

A fun reindeershaped candle holder. Trooper candle holder, £35, habitat.co.uk

FAMILY CHRISTMAS RULES REMEMBER SANTA IS ALWAYS WATCHING но но но каша

Keep Family Thaditions

LISTEN OUT FOR JINGLING BELLS

eat, drink & be merry (East FILL THE HOUSE WITH LAUGHTER

TAKE NOTE Hang it up

or use it! Christmas tea

morethanwords.uk.com

towel on hanger, £17,

our door is always open!



GOOD REFLECTIONS Stylish mirror place mat with a lovely message, £8 each, matalan.co.uk

> EAT UP! Serve the main meal in style. Joy dinner plates, £16

OPEN DOOR Doorstops are everywhere this year - this one's so cute! Robin door stop, £16, notonthehigh street.com



POST TOUR LETTER TO SAUTA DRAISE THE COOK AND THE EAT YOUR BRUSSEL SPROUTS



sweets and treats. Christmas tree serving dishes on tray, £5.99, dunelm.com



PUDDING PLEASE A fun addition to your sofa this winter. Pudding cushion, £10, sainsburys.co.uk



POUR ON THE GRAVY! So

important for the perfect complete Christmas dinner. It's All in the Gravy boat, £6, tesco.com



SHAKE IT UP A fun touch for the table. Christmas pud salt and pepper pots, £6, thechristmashome.com



DINE IN STYLE These cotton napkins are so sweet for your place settings. Robin and Holly napkins, £44.95 for 4, thornbackandpeel.co.uk w&h

woman&home A BRAND NEW ATTITUDE 169





After a great night's sleep you awake feeling you can achieve anything. Whether that's having enough energy to score the winning goal in the school footy team or doing whatever it is you put your mind and body to. At Silentnight, we make quality sleep solutions for all the family, designed to give ultimate comfort, support and total peace of mind. That's the secret to a great night's sleep.

For more information visit silentnight.co.uk/sleep-for-success



The secret to a great night's sleep Super-fast declutter tips

- home this Christmas

for a stylish - and organised

FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS

There's no point in trying to get your whole home "spring cleaned" if many rooms won't be seen by guests. Concentrate on areas that will make a difference.

- > Start with the outside Clean the windows, the front door and sweep the path. Mini Christmas or bay trees either side of the door give an instant welcome.
- ➤ For easy cleaning, QHotels resident housekeeping expert, Nan McDowell, shares her tricks:
- > Start by emptying rubbish, tidying and stripping linen. Then open the windows to let fresh air in.
- Don't use more than four products a multi-surface antibacterial cleaner, toilet gel, glass cleaner and polish will cover everything.
- ➤ Always spray product onto the cloth first, never the surface. Spraying directly onto the surface

will result in one area being saturated while others are missed.

- Colour-coded microfibre cloths make it easy to remember which to use on surfaces, floors, the bathroom and so on. For dust, you can't beat a feather duster. Using a damp cloth will lift the dust from upholstery. Once you've cleaned the bathroom, use a dry microfibre cloth to polish fittings and chrome. The best way to get a mirror streak-free is with water and a cloth.
- ➤ Simplify the products you use and put essentials into a bucket you can carry around.
- The very last thing you should do is vacuum the floors picking up everything that's been dropped while cleaning.





With decorations going up, you need to make space. Take a box around your living areas and remove at least half your ornaments, books and photos. Store the box in a spare room, garage or shed until the new year.

- Give the whole family a mission to repatriate shoes, clothes, toys and books to their "home". If you have younger children, get them to sort their existing toys before Christmas and give some to charity.
- Recycle any build-up of newspapers or junk mail.
- Set up an area for wrapping or put it all in one box that can be taken to any room: paper, ribbons, tape and scissors all together makes it less daunting.

FOOD STORAGE

- Clear out the fridgefreezer, use up food before you restock, and throw away anything that's out of date.
- Wash the fridge thoroughly. Dettol Power & Fresh Anti-bacterial Multi-Action Spray kills 99.9% of bacteria, £2.20, sainsburys.co.uk
- Adjust shelves to give your turkey space (it needs room to avoid bacteria growth).

Plan before you shop

- Stick to a list so you don't end up buying too much
- Create space by storing drinks outside in a cool box.
- Set aside time to make dishes that can be frozen – see womanandhome.com/freezer

CLASSY CLEANER BUYS

Dr Beckmann Power Cleaner is a paste that's suitable for use inside and outside. Use it to remove kitchen grease and grime, limescale in the bathroom and window frames, £4.09, dr-beckmann.co.uk



At 40cm, these cloths are bigger than your average, and with no need for chemicals,

whichever colour you use, you'll be "green". The range includes a microfibre duster, kitchen, bathroom and polishing cloth, £2.58 each. We love these 2-in-1 sponges — an absorbent micro-terry side and a textured surface for tougher tasks, £2.99 for

four, all lakeland.co.uk

The AeroBed Comfort
Classic guest bed
transforms in just
three minutes with
a screw-on pump;

it can also deflate

in seconds. From £74.99, aerobed.co.uk

The DuActiva brush has dual action bristles and a foam "scraper", which is perfect for picking up pine needles, as well as dust in one clean sweep, £6.49, vileda.co.uk w&h



MANDYSHEAVEN.CO.UK



Great reads

Books editor Fanny Blake picks the best new books out this month and talks to the novelist Adele Parks



CARRYING

Homer Hickam

HOT READS THIS MONTH

FAMILY SECRETS

The Marble Collector by Cecelia Ahern (HarperCollins)

Finding her father's collection of marbles prompts Sabrina's discovery that he is not all she believed him to be. An illuminating and touching father/daughter story about memory, childhood and secrets.

HISTORICAL THRILLER

Playing with Fire by Tess Gerritsen (Bantam Press)

A piece of music triggers violence in musician Julia's three-year-old daughter. Searching for answers, she travels to Venice and its past. A change of beat for Gerritsen, but as intriguing and satisfying as always.

FABULOUS DEBUT

The Clasp by Sloane Crosley (Hutchinson)

Three friends reunite for the wedding of a college friend only to embark on a road trip that takes them across the globe in search of a missing necklace. A huge hilarious pleasure from start to finish.

QUIRKY NOVEL

Carrying Albert Home by Homer Hickam (HarperColllins)

Elsie has a choice: her husband or her pet alligator, Albert. Get on board this delightful road trip of a novel that sees Homer and Elsie driving Albert home. An absolute delight.

REAL LIVES

The Penguin Lessons by Tom Michell (Michael Joseph)

While teaching in Argentina, Michell rescued a penguin from an oil slick. When the bird refused to leave him, he took it home for it to become confidant and companion both to him and his pupils. A crazy, witty, enchanting story.



WHAT'S ON MY E-READER



PRUE LEITH

E-readers are great for big, serious reads, which is what I like on holiday. The Classical World: An Epic History of Greece and Rome by Robin Lane Fox

(Penguin) is so hefty it will take another holiday to finish it, and then I will be bereft. Lane Fox's prose is clear, convincing and fascinating.

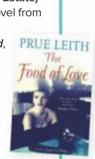
Keeping an Eye Open by Julian Barnes

(Jonathan Cape) is all about art, so an odd choice for an e-reader but if you have your iPad next to it, you can see the pictures he's talking about as you go. Completely compelling portraits of (mostly) French painters from Romanticism to Modernism – it's well-informed and deeply admiring, but never didactic.

I've only read half a chapter of *The Girl who Saved* the King of Sweden by Jonas Jonasson (Fourth Estate) and it's all I can do to stop. This is the second novel from the man who wrote *The Hundred-year-old Man who Climbed out the Window and Disappeared*, and I know I am in for a crazy story of a lavatory cleaner who gets herself mixed up in nuclear bomb making, faking Han dynasty ceramic horses, the Israeli secret service and the

Prue Leith's new novel, The Food of Love (Quercus), is out now.

King of Sweden. Can't wait.



CRIME



THE YELLOW
DIAMOND
BY ANDREW
MARTIN
(FABER
& FABER)
When his
colleague

DI George Quinn is shot dead in a London park, investigating officer Blake Reynolds is drawn into the world of the super rich who play by different rules. A detailed and compelling read.



RECIPES
FOR LOVE &
MURDER BY
SALLY ANDREW
(CANONGATE
BOOKS)

The murder of an abused

wife shatters the cosy world of Tannie Maria and her friend Harriet. Detection, recipes and a cracking mystery set in South Africa make this an irresistible, page-turning debut novel. >>

"My new novel is about the moral dilemma faced by conscientious objectors"



Adele Parks lives
in Guildford, Surrey
with her husband Jim
and 15-year-old son
Conrad. She has
written 15 bestselling
novels including *The State*

We're In and Spare Brides. Her new novel, If You Go Away, is an epic love story set during the First World War.

For me, the story always comes before the characters. When I read a non-fiction account of "surplus women" after

World War One, I wanted to know more about what it was like for the women left at home during the war and who then had to pick up the pieces

afterwards. That was the impetus behind *Spare Brides*. I wanted to tell the stories of these voiceless women.

While researching the war, I became fascinated by the plight of conscientious objectors. When men were joining up in their millions to fight for their country, to be a conscientious

objector was a social embarrassment. In 1916, when national conscription came in, it then became illegal.

I'm a bit of a geek and love learning new things. We reach an age where we challenge ourselves less, so having the challenge of research is exciting for me. I wanted to be as faithful to history as possible so I read all the accounts I could find, listened to recordings of survivors in the Imperial War Museum, read diaries, propaganda and studied lots of maps!

As a mother of a teenage son, I couldn't help putting myself in the

position of the women who lost sons and husbands. Until now, I hadn't thought of how physical the war really was. Ordinary men were expected to stick a bayonet or bullet in another human being, then come home if they were lucky — and live with it.

My hero, Howard, is a man before his time, which is always attractive.

I was aware that his name rhymes with "coward", which made me question whether not going to fight made him a weak or a strong man. At times I found him difficult because he was facing a terrible moral dilemma; being one man not going along with a million others.

The hero is a man before his time

I wanted my heroine, Vivian, to be representative of those women of the time.

When the novel opens,

her life is restricted and tedious. Her main concerns are about her looks, her life as a debutante, and hooking a wealthy chap. That all changes with the outbreak of war. Making a terrible decision means she is forced into a disastrous marriage. When her husband goes to fight, she is given independence and can blossom.

LAST-MINUTE STOCKING FILLERS

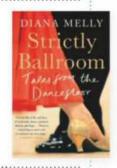


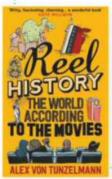
Girl Talk in the Pink by Kathy Lette (Kinkajou)

The wit and wisdom of Kathy Lette condensed into this tiny pink volume offers pun-in-cheek female solidarity through all the stages of womanhood and raises a smile on every page.

Strictly Ballroom: Tales from the Dancefloor by Diana Melly (Short Books)

At 76, Diana Melly took up ballroom dancing as an antidote to her bereavement. In this frank and funny memoir, she relates how her life was transformed as a result.





Reel History: The
World According to
the Movies by Alex
von Tunzelmann
(Atlantic Books)
Entertaining journey
through history as
depicted in films. Great
for fans who want to

sort fact from fiction.

READING ROOM

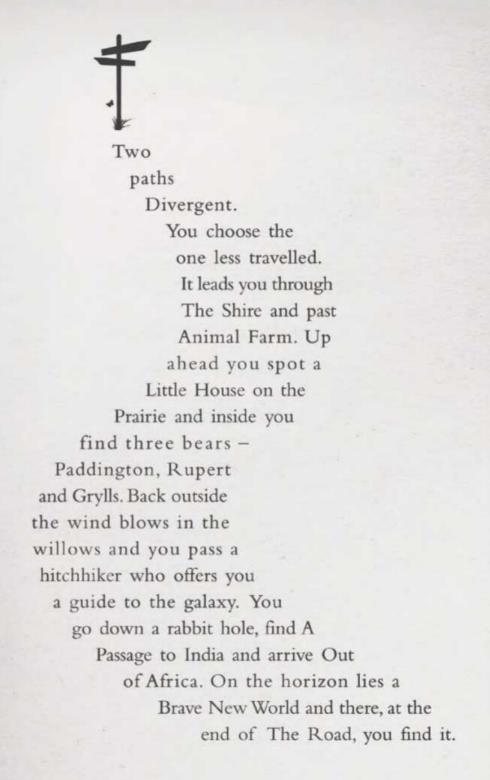
THIS MONTH'S W&H READING ROOM CHOICE

In Bitter Chill by Sarah Ward (Faber & Faber)

Do you know about our online book club?
The w&h Reading
Room is free to join and each month we send a free book to 25 readers to review. This month's choice is a top-class, page-turning mystery of loss and dark family secrets by debut author Sarah Ward, whose blog, crimepieces.com, reviews top crime fiction around the world.

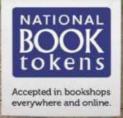
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Why I don't • 1 by JODI PICOULT

Bestselling author Jodi writes movingly about her grandmother who gave her so much... except her magic ways with wool

y aversion to knitting grew from a lack of necessity. When I was growing up, my grandmother made my sweaters. There were roll-necks and fisherman sweaters and delicate cardigans, fringed ponchos and turtlenecks and sleeveless vests. She would visit us and sit on the couch as we gathered to watch *M*A*S*H* or *Little House on the Prairie*. When the dialogue on the television stopped, before the commercial began, I could hear her knitting needles chatter like teeth. Her hands were smooth and dry and warm, the nails cut short, the yarn looped around her fingers. On her lap, that scroll of wool grew by inches every time I remembered to look. Her knitting bag, a brown 70s zigzag of tapestry, squatted on its crossed haunches beside her feet. Inside were magical contraptions: giant safety pins to hold stitches, pattern

books marked with the chicken scratch of her handwriting, and Ziploc bags filled with the disembodied parts of sweaters: a triangle that would be an arm, a flat square of belly, the yawning notch of a neckline.

To say I idolised my grandmother would be an understatement. She took care of me when I was tiny, and my mother was finishing her student teaching. She would drive me to nursery school, where she taught, and afterwards, we would stop at Baskin-Robbins for ice cream. I would watch her do her make-up, ending with an explosive dust of powder on her face. She read to me, walked with me, pushed me on the swings and clapped at my little girl dances. My crayon drawings covered her refrigerator and my first published poem was printed in the newsletter that went out to her neighbourhood in Bayside,

Queens, NYC. She was one of my first fans, and my most ardent one. In return, I was hers. I watched her hands fly, as if her fingers were having a conversation, as she knitted every night. I scoured the dated pictures in the knitting magazines, pointing to the sweaters that I thought were the prettiest. My grandmother was smart, strong, beautiful, creative, talented. I wanted to be just like her.

She'd been raised in the countryside of upstate New York. The daughter of immigrants, she was one of five children. She told me about her sister Frieda, who could look at a dress on any model or in

a fashion magazine, and could cut a pattern and recreate it perfectly.

It was Frieda who taught my grandmother how to knit. By the time I had a conscious understanding of my grandmother's unerring talent with knitting needles, I'd already been the recipient of her sweaters for years. Every baby photo of me taken in winter features her handiwork. My school photos almost always included a cardigan she'd made, or a pullover that matched my green eyes.

With your own hands is crafted from love

small, cool har certain she is in at bare walls bought those loves them. E arms of Tylen

I remember when my grandmother first made a sweater for the man who would become my husband - a thick, off-white cable-knit sweater that he still has, almost 25 years later. If my grandmother knitted a sweater for someone outside of the immediate family, it meant that they were now in the inner sanctum. It was her way of saying that I'd chosen well. The sweaters she knitted for my children - bright and cosy, with polar bears and pandas and puppies – were passed down from oldest to youngest. There is still a box in my attic where those sweaters now sit between layers of tissue paper, years before my grandchildren arrive in the world.

I never learned to knit because I didn't have to; because the presence of my grandmother in my life, and the gifts spun from her hands, seemed timeless and eternal. As the family expanded, we took turns – it might not be every birthday we received a new sweater, but every third year. Instead of a sweater, it might be a hat or a pair of socks. As my grandmother grew older, we had to take the pattern books to the copy store to enlarge the typeface and the charts, so she could read them. Her hands, still strong-knuckled

and firm, became arthritic. It got harder for her to hold the knitting needles. Sometimes she would fall asleep in the middle of a stitch. Eventually, when she came to visit, she no longer brought the tapestry knitting bag with her.

I wondered if she missed the weight of the needles in her hands. If she yearned to smooth out the pieces of a sweater and pin them into finished form. If she touched the yarn she'd never had the chance to use and dreamed of scarves, of mittens, of wraps and pullovers that might have been.

My grandmother is 100 years old now. Her joints, the first part of her physique

with your own
hands is crafted
from love

to betray her, have not been the last. Eyes, ears, neck, stomach; she has been leaving us by degrees for several years. This week, I rush to the hospital to see her. Sitting at her bedside, I hold her

small, cool hand in mine. Loopy with drugs, certain she is in her own home, she points at bare walls and tells me where she bought those paintings, and why she loves them. Eventually, wrapped in the arms of Tylenol No.3, she drifts asleep.

I do not let go, and I remember the only time I ever attempted to knit.

I was in high school, and I was working as a lifeguard at a rest home. Most of the time, I sat by myself, bored to tears. Inspired, I decided to ask my grandmother to teach me how to knit.

"What do you want to make?" she asked.
"A sweater."

She gave me a pair of her needles and a skein of yarn. She offered me a pattern that she didn't think would be too difficult. She showed me how to cast on, and how to knit and purl. She taught me how to drop a stitch. She did this all quickly, like a choreographer intentionally moving fast to weed out those mentally unprepared to be challenged. But I followed her lead, and when I didn't know what I was doing, I fudged it, creating Swiss cheese holes in the weave.

But I didn't care because I was going to be the most prolific knitter in the world. I was going to finish this sweater so fast, it would make my grandmother swell with pride. After two weeks, I laid on the kitchen table the two sleeves, the front and the back. I joined them together with my grandmother's help and, grinning, pulled the completed sweater over my head.

One sleeve ended at my elbow. There were gaps in some spots and knots in others. The sweater bunched weirdly underneath my armpits, yet also somehow gaped at the waist. It would have been perfect, if I were Quasimodo.

"What do I do?" I asked my grandmother. She shrugged. "You rip it out," she said. "And start again."

I don't know what happened to that abomination, although I can assure you that I did not pull the stitches and begin anew. I couldn't bear to see all that work negated into a crimped tangle of yarn. I had not realised that it wasn't just the mechanical act of knitting that I'd have to learn. It was an evenness of tone and temper; a measure of patience. I would have to understand that it wasn't the speed with which I reached the last row, but the care with which I'd crafted each stitch.

My grandmother, maybe, had learned this lesson from her sister Frieda. I wasn't there to see her stumble; I only arrived when she was a pro. And all my life, really, I'd followed her example. To fail at something she could do so fluently – literally, with her eyes closed – was something I could not bear.

I didn't try again. Instead, I just gratefully accepted the birthday sweaters and the holiday scarves, continuing to take them – and my grandmother – for granted.

But as I sit at her hospital bed, I realise I should have ripped apart that sweater and started over. I should have begged my grandmother to teach me how to keep the stitches fine and the spaces even as a heartbeat. I should have heard what she had been trying to tell me all along: that what you make with your own hands is not crafted from wool, but from love.

When she could no longer knit, I should have taken up her needles. I would have liked to make a blanket for her.

She has kept me warm for years; I only wish I could return the favour. $\mathbf{w} \& \mathbf{h}$

Jodi's Picoult's novel Leaving Time and her first young adult novel, Between the Lines, written with her daughter Samantha van Leer, are out now. Jodi's new novel, Living Colour, will be published in November 2016 (all Hodder & Stoughton).



web/EEKEND

GREAT FILMS, THEATRE AND CULTURAL TREATS



Must-see movies

BY THE SEA Written, directed and produced by Angelina Jolie, this intimate drama sees her and husband Brad Pitt reunite on-screen for the first time since 2005's *Mr & Mrs Smith*. The pair play married couple Vanessa, a former dancer, and Roland, an American writer, who take a trip to a small seaside town in France in an attempt to save their rocky relationship. Out 11 December.



VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN

This new reimagining of Mary Shelley's novel stars James McAvoy as the radical scientist, while Daniel Radcliffe plays his troubled young assistant, Igor Strausman. We see the monster's dark origins and the emergence of Frankenstein as we know him today. Out 3 December.



legendary saga created by George Lucas. Set 30 years after 1983's *Return* of the Jedi, the new cast includes Gwendoline Christie, who plays the first female stormtrooper. Out 17 December.



MUSIC

Adele, 25

Four years after the release of the multi-millionselling 21, Adele is back with an incredible third album, 25. With just a few of the names involved including songwriting legend Diane Warren as well as Coldplay collaborator Paul Epworth, it's a starstudded affair. See adele.tv

BOOK NOW

Book tickets and get discounts on West End musicals, drama and the arts at boxoffice.womanandhome.com

There are plenty of great shows opening on the stage this autumn – here's our pick of the best...

NUTCRACKER

The English National Ballet brings this festive tale to life, with exquisite dancing and Tchaikovsky's magnificent score played live. 16 December-10 January; ballet.org.uk/

whats-on/nutcracker



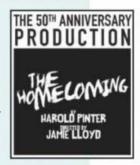


AMALUNA

Cirque du Soleil marks 20 years at the Royal Albert Hall with a spectacular new show, loosely based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* 16 January-14 February; cirquedusoleil.com

THE HOMECOMING

Keith Allen, John Simm and Gemma Chan (*Humans*) star in Pinter's cautionary tale of family reunion. Until 13 February 2016; thejamielloyd company.com



EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

Belinda Campbell is the executive producer on the new BBC One 20-part drama series, Dickensian, set within the fictional realms of Charles Dickens' novels. She shares her insider knowledge...

What can we expect from the series?

We've created this very integrated world in 1850 where various characters from Dickens' novels all cross paths – so it's Dickens, but not as you know it! We have three main stories - firstly focusing on the young Amelia Havisham from Great Expectations and what happens when her father disinherits her brother. Amelia is best friends with Honoria Barbary from Bleak House, which introduces the next story. Then the third story introduces Inspector Bucket (also from Bleak House), who arrives on the street to investigate a murder. The amount of writers and producers who have said, "I wish I'd had that idea!" is incredible.

Do you need to know the Dickens novels to enjoy it?

Not at all. It's not a
Dickens adaptation,
it's an original
drama. We had
some amazing
Dickens and Victorian
experts who read the
storylines and the scripts
over, but we haven't been

slavish to the novels by any means.

How did you recreate the experience of Victorian London?

The biggest challenge was finding somewhere big enough to accommodate the height of the set designs! I remember going into the building we chose – a Jack Wills clothing depot in Greenford, West London

— thinking, "How are we ever going to do it?" Watching it go up was incredible.

There's a 90-metre cobbled street with a fully functioning pub at one end, churches and law courts at the other, as well as 27 two-storey buildings in the back alleys around it. We've used visual



effects fairly extensively too, so that world feels even bigger. It's a work of art.

What have the cast been like to work with?

Pauline Collins (above) is the most wonderful Mrs Gamp (Martin Chuzzlewit). She's a midwife-cum-nurse, but all she wants is to get hold of her next glass of gin! She's cunning, flirtatious and downright dishonest. And Caroline Quentin (above) is extraordinary as Mrs

Bumble (Oliver Twist). She said it's the first time she's played a bad person, so it's been a lot of fun for her. She made a good point too that women had

no power in Victorian times, so they had to use everything they had. In Mrs Bumble's case, it's her sexual hold over her husband, which is brilliant to watch.

Dickensian starts on BBC One this month.



The hottest new shows on the box



The Sound of Music Live!

This two-hour live extravaganza is a special adaptation of the Broadway musical starring Katherine Kelly (above), Kara Tointon, Alexander Armstrong and Julian Ovenden. ITV



Fungus the Bogeyman

Keeley Hawes, Timothy Spall and Victoria Wood (above) lead an all-star cast in this festive three-part drama inspired by Raymond Briggs' much-loved story. **Sky1**



Strictly Come Dancing Final

Don't miss the dazzling finale of the nation's favourite dance show as the four celebrity finalists compete one last time to claim the sought-after glitterball trophy. **BBC One**



Characters from

Dickens' novels

all cross paths

Downton Abbey Christmas Special

Tissues at the ready as the sixth and final series draws to a close with a drama-filled yuletide special. The plot is tightly under wraps, but rumours of a shock funeral are rife. **ITV**



Call the Midwife Christmas Special

The midwives and nuns of Nonnatus House are celebrating the festive period once again, kicking off a fifth eight-part series. **BBC One w**&h





woman&home offers

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Sue James, Editorial Director



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- + Extensive and fully inclusive touring programmes



Vietnam & Cambodia

Sixteen days from £1,999pp

Selected departures January to November 2016. Price includes:

- + Return flights, taxes and transfers
- + Four- and five-star hotels with breakfast, plus five meals
- ♣ In Cambodia Phnom Penh, and the ancient city of Angkor
- ♣ In Vietnam Hanoi by cycle rickshaw, cruises in Halong Bay, and along the Mekong Delta, the Forbidden City in Hue, and Saigon and the Cu-Chi tunnels
- + Escorted by an experienced tour manager



New Zealand

Land of the Long White Cloud. 22 days from £3,999pp

Selected departures March to November 2016, and January and February 2017. Price includes:

- ♣ Return flights, taxes and transfers
- ♣ Stay in three- and four-star hotels with breakfast
- + Tour Auckland, Queenstown, Napier, Christchurch, Nelson and cruise Milford Sound and Abel Tasman National Park's coastline
- + Enjoy a helicopter ride over Franz Josef Glacier
- + Escorted by an experienced tour manager



Lake Maggiore, Orta & the Matterhorn

Eight days half board from £879pp

Selected departures April to October 2016. Price includes:

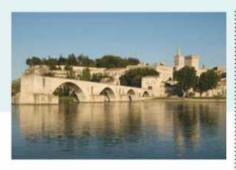
- + Return flights, taxes and transfers
- + Seven nights four-star hotel with half-board
- + A visit to Isola Bella, Zermatt in the Swiss Alps, viewing the Matterhorn, and Lakes Como and Orta, and Orta San Giulio
- + A ride on the Centovalli railway and a cruise on the lake
- → Escorted by an experienced tour manager











Undiscovered Provence

Eight days from £869pp

Selected departures April to October 2016. Price includes:

- + Return flights from many UK airports, taxes and transfers or return Eurostar and TGV
- + Seven nights three-star superior to five-star hotels with B&B and four meals
- ♣ Tours of Aix-en-Provence, Avignon, Arles, the Camargue, the Luberon hills and La Ciotat
- ♣ Escorted by an experienced tour manager



Madrid, Salamanca ℧ Toledo

Seven days from £599pp

Selected departures April to October 2016. Price includes:

- + Return flights from Gatwick, Heathrow, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Luton, Dublin or Edinburgh, taxes and transfers
- + Six nights in three-star superior and four-star hotels with B&B
- + A visit to Toledo, and a tour of Madrid
- + A walking tour of Salamanca; a visit to Aranjuez and Segovia
- + Escorted by an experienced tour manager



Sicily

Eight days half-board from £849pp

Selected departures April to October 2016. Price includes:

- + Return flights, taxes and transfers
- ♣ Seven nights in a four-star hotel with half-board
- + A visit to Agrigento's Valley of the Temples, baroque Palermo, hilltop Taormina, Mount Etna Europe's largest active volcano, Monreale's medieval cathedral and cloisters, and Siracusa city of Archimedes
- + Escorted by an experienced tour manager

Tour of Venice – classic and undiscovered Five days from £579pp

Selected departures up to November 2016. Price includes:

- ♣ Return flights from Heathrow, Stansted, Gatwick, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds/Bradford, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Bristol or Dublin, taxes and transfers
- ♣ Stay for four nights in a four-star hotel on the Grand Canal
 with breakfast
- + Visits to St Mark's Basilica, the Doge's Palace and Murano in the Venice lagoon
- ♣ Escorted by an experienced tour manager



*Supplements applicable for certain regional stations. Cruise durations may vary. Additional entrance costs may apply. Prices are per person, based on two sharing and subject to finite availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Offer operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Travel Ltd, ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430, a company wholly independent of woman&home, published by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd. woman&home will collect your personal information to process your order and alert you of news, new products, services and offers available from woman&home and from Time Inc. (UK) Ltd by email, phone or post. You can unsubscribe from emails by clicking unsubscribe from within the email.

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THE TOP 10 WINTER HOLIDAYS

It's the big question at this time of year – do you want to ski in a winter wonderland or are you desperate for some sunshine?

James Luckhurst picks the best of both

Best for a luxury villa

SUN: PARADISE BEACH NEVIS, CARIBBEAN This beautiful resort on the tiny island of Nevis in the West Indies is called Paradise Beach for a reason. Totally unspoilt, there are hammocks to while away the sun-filled days in – rum punch in hand – before you pad barefoot up to your ocean-front villa.



Paradise Beach reopened this year after a major refurbishment, and the result is seven stunning two-, three- and four-bed detached villas, each with their own private plunge pool and outdoor cabana.

The modern Balinese design includes a central kitchen area and in a wonderful open-plan living room that's perfect for families or friends. All the bedrooms are en-suite and there are outdoor showers nestled in the gardens, plus luxurious Hermès toiletries in the marble bathrooms. Private chefs can be arranged (from £30pp) and the food is delicious. For the adventurous there's horse riding on the beach, snorkelling trips or

hikes up the magnificent Nevis Peak. If you want to be pampered, spa treatments can be arranged in your villa or on the beach.

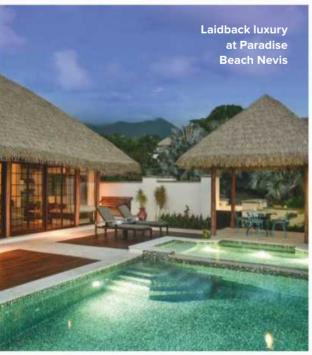
DON'T MISS A tour of the island to

learn about its British history. There's also a beautifully maintained Botanical Gardens (botanicalgardennevis.com). THE COST Western & Oriental (westernoriental.com; tel 020 3588 6130) offers seven nights for the price of five staying at Paradise Beach Nevis (paradisebeachnevis.com) during January 2016. Prices start from £1,420pp, based on six adults sharing and including return flights with British Airways to St Kitts and private transfers.



winter holidays







SNOW: CHALET AMAZON
CREEK, CHAMONIX, FRANCE

The chic resort of Chamonix sits at the foot of magnificent Mont Blanc, the highest peak in Europe. Filled with smart boutiques, bars and restaurants against a backdrop of pinch-meperfect scenery, the picturesque town centre is magical and to be enjoyed just as much as the legendary pistes.

Chalet Amazon Creek, which sleeps ten in five cosy en-suite double bedrooms, is the perfect luxury base. Fully catered, you can host elegant dinner parties for friends and family with a Champagne reception and four-course meal including pumpkin ravioli, pan-fried cod, honey roast lamb and a slither of moreish chocolate delice. Skiers are chauffeur-driven to the slopes each day or you can choose to stay behind and laze in front of the open log fire. There's also a stylish cowhide cinema room and built-in

spa to retreat to, which includes indoor and outdoor hot tubs on the wraparound terrace. For couples and smaller families, neighbouring chalet Baby Bear sleeps up to four and is finished with the same finesse as the flagship Amazon Creek.

DON'T MISS A snow-shoeing excursion that follows a tranquil stream beneath Glacier des Bossons, with the likelihood you'll spot reindeers through the forest.

THE COST Chalet Amazon Creek (amazoncreek.co.uk; tel 01865 865456) sleeps ten and costs from £14,320 per week – £1,432pp.
Prices include transfers, private chef, chalet manager, hostess, Champagne reception and canapés on arrival, with breakfast, tea, and four-course dinners on six nights. Return fares with SWISS (swiss.com) start at £99 from London Gatwick. Check lift pass, tuition and ski hire prices at chamonix.net >>



Q Best for pampering

SNOW: DAS CENTRAL, SÖLDEN, AUSTRIA

If you like your winter holidays shaken not stirred then Sölden is the place for you. Nestled high in the Austrian alps, it's where the mountain sequence in the latest Bond film, *Spectre*, was filmed. So you'll be following in Daniel Craig's footsteps if you holiday here.



The best hotel in the village is Das Central, a five-star luxury alpine lodge with a spa any Bond girl would feel at home in. There's a Venetian water world theme with ten different saunas and steam rooms, as well as a salt grotto, a variety of hot tubs, indoor swimming pool and relaxation area. Treatments – many based on vinotherapy and using grapes - start from £30 for 25 minutes. The healthy theme continues in the restaurants food is locally sourced and delicious, plus there's a fondue cavern in the wine cellar, a five-course gourmet menu every night and weekly gala dinners with a starter buffet that takes your breath away (that's if the altitude hasn't!).

If you're a skier, the slopes here are

wonderfully kept and relatively empty with a fantastic network of state-ofthe-art lifts and snow guaranteed until May. Das Central offers a ski shuttle bus service direct to the main lifts too. DON'T MISS Eating in ice Q - the magnificent restaurant perched at 3,048 metres on the summit of the Gaislachkogl mountain. It's no surprise they filmed Spectre here - there are panoramic floor-to-ceiling windows and an outdoor terrace overlooking the mountain peaks. THE COST Das Central (centralsoelden.com/en: tel 00 43 5254 22600) has double rooms from £122pp on a half-board basis. Direct flights from Gatwick to Innsbruck on

easyjet.com start from £72 return.









SUN: ONE & ONLY LE SAINT **GÉRAN, MAURITIUS**

The resort got its name from a ship called le St Géran, which sank off the coast of Mauritius in 1755. Today you'll find an immaculate tropical resort on its own private peninsula, with a peaceful lagoon that's perfect for watersports.

There's a nine-hole golf course on site, with kite-surfing, glass-bottom boat excursions, snorkelling in the lagoon and deep-sea fishing expeditions. But it's hard to tear yourself away from the

magnificent spa. w&h recommends the 120-minute ESPA Chakra Balancing Body Treatment, which begins with body brushing and exfoliation, followed by a massage with warmed volcanic stones and essential oils.

DON'T MISS The island capital, Port Louis, around an hour's drive from Le Saint Géran for shopping - there are

170 luxury boutiques situated on the Caudan Waterfront or textiles, jewellery and handicrafts in the main market. Or head to L'Aventure du Sucre, a museum around 45 minutes from Le Saint Géran, which lays out the importance of sugar on the history and identity of the island. THE COST Destinology (destinology. co.uk; tel 0333 271 5405) offers seven nights in a Junior Suite from £2,139pp (departing January) on a half-board basis, including flights with Emirates from London Gatwick.



SNOW: KAKSLAUTTANEN, LAPLAND, FINLAND

More than a third of Finland lies above the Arctic Circle, where the winter months bring an abundance of snow and the must-see, once-in-a-lifetime Northern Lights. In Kakslauttanen you stay in traditional log cabins, though there are

also glass and snow igloos you can book for a very special night (right).

There's plenty of activities on offer, including cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, snowmobiling or going on husky or reindeer rides. By day, take in the beauty of the unspoilt northern landscape. By night, gaze up and scan the sky for the Northern Lights. The cycle of solar activity is currently at a peak, so you have an excellent chance of seeing an aurora.

DON'T MISS Having a sauna! It's part of daily life for many Finns, and here you'll find steam saunas and traditional smoke saunas.

THE COST Regent Holidays (regentholidays.co.ul; tel 020 3733 8979) offers a three-night adventure trip to Finnish Lapland from £935pp including flights, transfers and breakfast. >>



woman&home travel offers



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- + Guided tours of historic Rome and medieval Siena
- + Guided tour of Florence, including a timed visit to the Uffizi Gallery
- + Guided tour of Arezzo, a visit to Assisi the birthplace of
- St Francis, plus Tuscany's stunning countryside
- ♣ Escorted by an experienced tour manager



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Seven days from £699 per person

Selected departures April to October 2016. Price includes:

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- + Six nights four-star hotel accommodation with breakfast
- ♣ Guided tour of Catalonia's capital city, Barcelona
- + Visit to the beautiful medieval city of Girona
- → Walking tour of Tarragona, the ancient Roman capital of Iberia
- + Visit to the world-famous monastery at Montserrat
- + Visit to a Cava vineyard to discover the art of wine making
- + Escorted by an experienced tour manager



Switzerland's Bernese Oberland Tour
Eight days from only £1,399 per person

Selected departures May to October 2016. Price includes:

- ♣ Return flights from Heathrow, Manchester and Birmingham, taxes and transfers
- + Seven nights four-star superior accommodation, with dinner
- + A mountain railway ride past the majestic Jungfrau, Mönch and Eiger in the Alps, then Kleine Scheidegg and Grindelwald
- ♣ A visit to Brienz and another breathtaking ride on the Brienz Rothorn cog railway
- + Cable-car ride to Lake Oeschinen and a visit to Lucerne
- + Escorted by an experienced tour manager



Berlin, Dresden, Meissen & Colditz
Five days from £529 per person

Selected departures April to October 2016. Price includes:

- ♣ Return flights from Gatwick, Heathrow, Stansted, Luton, Bristol, Manchester, East Midlands, Dublin, Glasgow or Liverpool, taxes and transfers
- + Four nights in a hand-picked four-star hotel, with breakfast
- + Guided tour of Berlin and a walking tour of Dresden, known as the "Florence of the Elbe"
- ♣ Visit and tour of the Meissen porcelain studio
- + Visit to Colditz Castle, the famous Second World War prisoner camp
- ♣ Escorted by an experienced tour manager

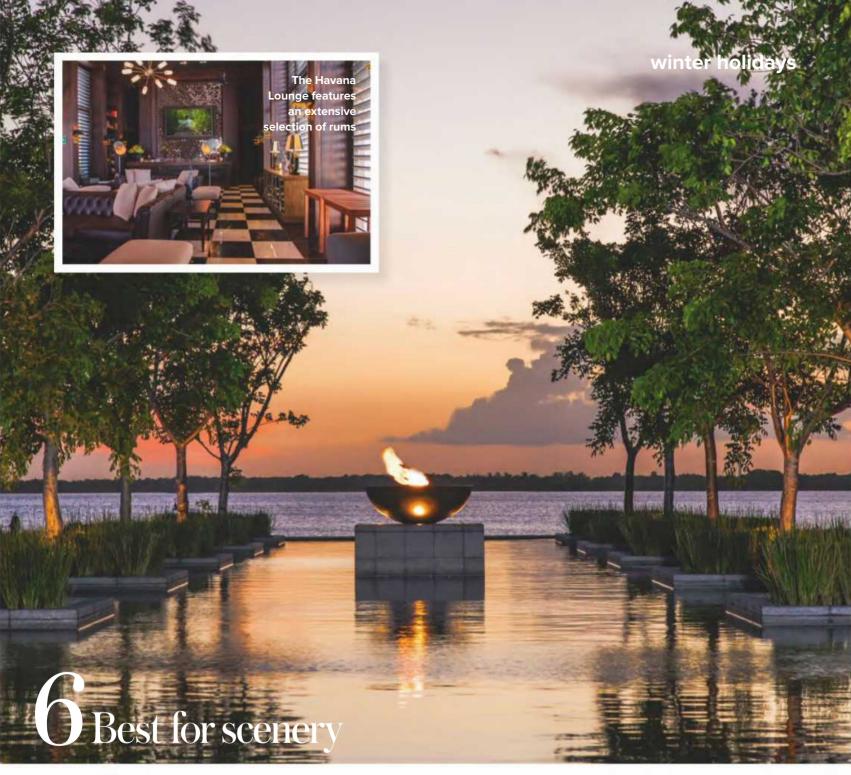
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SUN: NIZUC RESORT,

Cancun on the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico is a great winter sun destination due to its 25 degree plus temperatures, incredible Mayan heritage and those fabulous sugarwhite beaches. Don't go without a visit to Chichén Itzá, the region's most famous Mayan ruin and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Just 45 minutes south of Cancun you'll find Nizuc, an exceptionally elegant resort where you can choose between luxurious villas, suites or penthouses. It's on one of the most stunning beaches anywhere in the east of Mexico, developed by the Mexican government and used as a luxury hideaway for visiting heads of state until it was sold in 2005. Join a Pilates class, brush up on your tennis with the on-site pro or get out to discover the pyramid Mayan ruins at Chichén Itzá, Uxmal or close by at El Rey.

When the sun goes down eat delicious ceviche in the NI Restaurant, sample the different rums in the Havana Lounge or tuck in to modern Asian cuisine at Indochine.

DON'T MISS An unforgettable day-long boat trip to the Garrafon Natural Reef Park, where you can swim with dolphins (£85pp), or drive your own speedboat on a thrilling 45-minute excursion through the mangrove channel (from £45pp). You can get as far as Punta Nizuc, part of the world's second largest coral reef. THE COST Nizuc (nizuc.com) costs from £295 per room per night, which includes breakfast and use of all the pools and facilities. Virgin Atlantic (virgin-atlantic.com; tel 0844 209 2770) has flights from London Gatwick to Cancun from £613 in February. >>



Best for families



Les Arcs, in the French Alps, is a brilliant destination for winter sports lovers. It's one of the highest resorts in the Alps, so you're almost guaranteed snow right up until April. It's a ten-hour drive from Calais or you can fly to Chambéry with a 90-minute coach transfer.

Apartments, in four main buildings, are big and well equipped. Choose from a dozen restaurants and cafés nearby. There's also a big supermarket if you want to self-cater. There's an indoor/

outdoor pool, and each building has its own sauna, Jacuzzi and hot tubs. **DON'T MISS** The brilliant Ski School classes that meet every morning in Arc 1950's central square.

THE COST A two-bed apartment costs £1,207 for a week in mid March with Erna Low (ernalow.co.uk; tel 020 7584 2841), who can also book your travel arrangements (and give you a complimentary Flexiplus upgrade if you use Eurotunnel). Ski hire costs from £60 a week; six mornings in ski school around £180; lift pass £175.

SUN: MELIA DUNAS RESORT, ALGODOEIRO BEACH, CAPE VERDE

Cape Verde is a relatively unknown destination off the northwest coast of Africa in the balmy central Atlantic. There's a warm, year-round climate – in February there are seven hours of sunshine with a temperature of around 24 degrees – and some of the world's most

beautiful beaches. Originally colonised by the Portuguese, Cape Verde is made up of ten islands. The vast Melia Dunas Resort faces the ocean, and boasts five swimming pools (one is adults only, two are children only) and six restaurants. If you're feeling active, then sign up for aqua gym or book an hour on one of the tennis courts.



DON'T MISS The capital, Santa Maria, is a colourful old fishing town full of surf shops, craft stores and beach bars.

THE COST Thomson (thomson.co.uk; tel 0844 050 2828) offers one week all-inclusive from £758pp (based on two adults for seven nights). Cape Verde is around six hours' flying time from the UK.

For more travel deals, visit womanandhome.com/travel

Best on a budget

SUN: MANATHAI, KHAO LAK, THAILAND

Thailand is one of the best long-haul places for guaranteed winter sun. The Manathai in Khao Lak (a 90-min transfer from Bangkok) is a new boutique hotel on Bangsak Beach. Activities include Thai cooking, beach yoga and watersports.

DON'T MISS Beachside eating.

THE COST Stay at the Manathai (manathai.com/khaolak) from £117 per night (in Feb) in a Deluxe Balcony Room where under-16s are free. Stay five nights or more and save a further 15%. Fly from London Heathrow to Phuket via Bangkok with ba.com from £792.





SNOW: CHALET CASALE, EL TARTER, ANDORRA

El Tarter in the Pyrenees is just a mile from the better-known resort of Soldeu, so it's a more affordable holiday. Chalet Casale is a converted building that can take up to 40 guests in en-suite twin bedrooms. **DON'T MISS** Unwinding in the chalet lounge, which has its own bar.

THE COST cheapflights.co.uk offers a week from £465pp (based on two sharing) and includes return flights and transfers, as well as chalet catering and wine. A six-day lift pass costs £190; ski and boot hire from £50. Five days of ski school (four hours per day) costs £175. w&h





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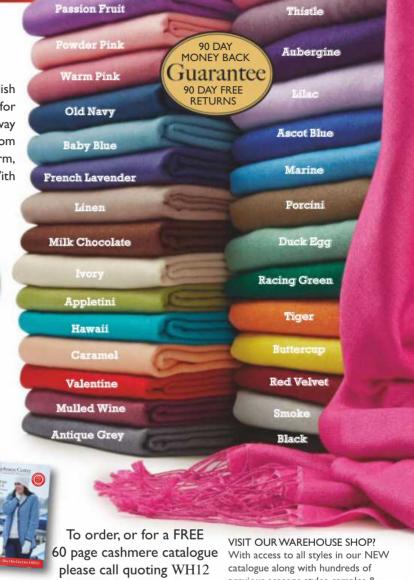
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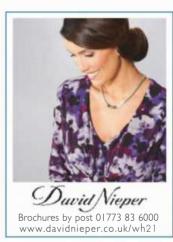
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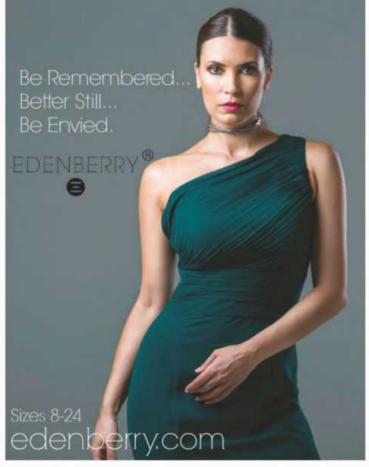














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Rachel became passionate about wanting to help as many people as possible with their weight problems, which led her to become a qualified weight loss consultant. In the last 10 years, she has helped over 3,000 clients from all walks of life to help bring their dieting days to an end once and for all. 'My clients' ages range from 8 years to 85 years old, so there is hope for everyone!'

client.

With an average weight loss of 7-14 lbs a month for clients and hundreds of hand written testimonials, Rachel's results

speak for themselves

For those who are not able to visit, a very successful remote support service is provided throughout the UK - distance is no Clients often comment on how impressed their doctors are with their results. 'My doctor is very happy- I've been able to come off blood pressure and cholesterol medication, says one. Another doctor said, 'All my lady patients on thyroid medication are struggling to lose weight, but you've lost 2 1/2 stone despite being on



of helping you lose the weight, addressing any difficulties along

the way, then we concentrate on keeping it off - for good!'

thyroxin - well done!' With an average weight loss of 7-14 lbs a month for clients and hundreds of hand written testimonials, Rachel's results speak for themselves. 'I see real results daily, time after time I see people's lives change in front of me.'

Rachel offers free consultations for those who are wanting to lose their weight once and for all.

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Rachel and her team give weekly one-to-one consultations, guiding you through the programme with personalised support, lots of empathy and total conviction in the success of the programme. Email support is available in between consultations.

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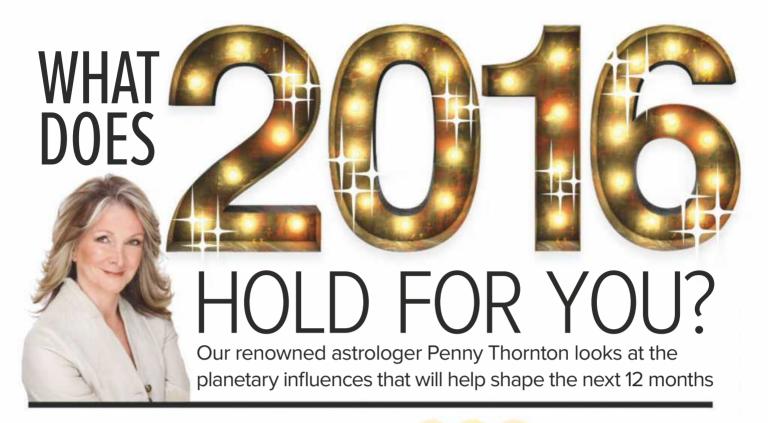
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nother year, another opportunity to make a dream come true, or at least do a better job of fulfilling our New Year's resolutions. Will 2016 bring us nearer a cure for dementia? Will the economy shrink and the price of oil rise? Will Prince Harry find his princess and will the White House become home to the first female President of the USA?

2016 will be a year of transformations. It marks the end of a nine-year cycle, so it is also a year of endings. Think back to 2007 when this nine-year

cycle began, specifically, the ninth month of 2007 – September – when the economy came tumbling down and institutions collapsed in front of our very eyes. It was the end of the Age of Prosperity and the beginning of the Age of Austerity.

The thing about endings is that nothing new can take root and prosper unless closure occurs. We know this from personal experience. We cannot open our heart to someone new unless we have processed the grief, anger and all those unpleasant emotions from the previous relationship.

And so it is with the economy. We may have learned to live on less, but the practices that brought down banking institutions in 2007 haven't changed; new measures intended to prevent a repeat of the crisis have not been fully implemented.

And still the national debt continues to rise. We could be heading towards an even bigger economic collapse – maybe not in 2016, but keep your eyes trained on 2020.

So, no, 2016 is not the end of austerity but it is a year when, if wrongs can be righted in whatever walk of life, the future for 2020 will look a lot brighter. And we don't just have to wait and see what David Cameron and George Osborne

2016 will

be a year of

transformations

can do to improve our lot.

We may have no control over the decisions made by huge institutions and world leaders, but we are in charge of our own actions.

I am a firm believer in the concept that every step each of us takes to become a wiser and more compassionate individual helps humanity as a whole onwards and upwards.

Perhaps our most important New Year's resolution, therefore, should be to act with grace and forbearance, whatever the cosmos and the Government throw at us.

Two planets have placed their signatures on the past nine years: Uranus, the revolutionary, and Pluto, the transformer. Together they have wreaked havoc with the global economy and periodically brought the eurozone to the brink, plus they gave birth to the Arab Spring. And if you've seen your marriage collapse, your job come to an end and faced huge unplanned changes, you can be certain Uranus and Pluto have had a hand in it.

However, these planets are not really the "bad guys" we astrologers often make them out to be. They are in charge of taking humanity to the next stage of its evolution. In so doing, they inspire huge advances in science, technology and medicine, and we'll see more of these breakthroughs in 2016. Put a ring around 16th March, 26th June and 24th November, when the planets will operate at their transformational best. There could be significant advances in the understanding and treatment of cancer and the nature of ageing. Yes, 70 really is going to be the new 45!

During 2016, Uranus and Pluto will be inspiring the end of chapters and the



beginning of new ones for those of you with birthdays from 6th-11th January, 4th-13th April, 7th-15th July and 8th-17th October. So if you have been debating a major life change, the green light is on.

Two other planets that give the year its individual character are Jupiter and Saturn. Saturn is at the beginning of its journey through Sagittarius, and bringing its maturing influence to bear on members of this sign and the Geminians, the Virgoans and the Pisceans. You'll work harder than ever for results but they'll be long-lasting.

To even things out a little, Jupiter, the Fortunate, will spend nine months of the year in Virgo, heaping blessings on these same four signs. Additions to the family, upwardly-mobile moves and a moment in the spotlight could be on the menu.

From early September Jupiter will transit Libra, elevating the success rate and bringing happiness not only to this sign but Aries, Cancer and Capricorn. September is the beginning of your landmark year.

The fixed signs - Taurus, Scorpio, Leo and Aquarius – are looking at a year of consolidation. You have an opportunity to regroup, reboot your energies and hopes and set in place long-term projects. Food for thought for Hillary Clinton, who has three planets in Scorpio. I'd call the presidency a long-term project, although the notion of regrouping casts an altogether different slant on her year ahead.

Saturn last made its way through Sagittarius almost 29 years ago. Great lessons were learned and major changes occurred in the travel and publishing industries – Fleet Street moved to Wapping, Space Shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after take-off and Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic Challenger II boat broke the world record for crossing the Atlantic. So we can expect major new trends and the occasional serious loss involving the airline business and the worlds of sport and media.

And now the really important question: will Prince Harry find his princess? Harry's astrological signals for love and marriage went off some five to seven years ago when Chelsy Davy was in the picture. He and Chelsy have some powerful and enduring links between their charts and if the opportunity arises for them to try a rematch in 2016, an engagement could be on the cards, with a Royal wedding in 2017. Chelsy really is Harry's true love. They should be together.

Here's to 2016 – a year of transformation for us all. w&h

Find out what's in store for you...

21 MARCH - 20 APRIL

Preparation meets opportunity in mid-March and mid-June, and you should select these periods to make your boldest moves. The secret of success is to take on big challenges but know when you are getting in over your head.

Your year ahead 09058-170090*

21 APRIL - 21 MAY

You are your own greatest resource. Never forget it. People and places far away figure prominently in 2016: some of you may have the opportunity to go thousands of miles while others will find a new life in a distant location.

Your year ahead 09058-170091*

GEMINI

22 MAY - 22 JUNE

The 23rd March, 2 June, 13 August and 8th December are all dates around which certain projects and associations may stand or fall. Early June is a particularly important period for affairs of the heart. Why? Wait and see.

Your year ahead 09058-170092*

CANCER 23 JUNE – 23 JULY

Jupiter's arrival at the base of your horoscope (9th September) will begin an upwardly mobile 12 months: some Cancerians will rise to prominence in their chosen field and many will be celebrating a new era for family life.

Your year ahead 09058-170093*

24 JULY - 23 AUGUST

A meeting or development occurring on or near 9 March could lead to great things. September is another month of bright potential. Valentine's Day and New Year's Eve could produce more than their share of Leo proposals and weddings.

Your year ahead 09058-170094*

24 AUGUST - 22 SEPTEMBER

The time has come to launch your ships, whether these are related to your career, personal plans or romantic aspirations. Some Virgos will find fame this year; others will be offered a top position, and all will make progress.

Your year ahead 09058-170095*

23 SEPTEMBER - 23 OCTOBER

Jupiter is the planet of entrepreneurs so its entry into your sign in September will help you get big ideas off the ground, and it will give you the kind of confidence and optimism that gets you places.

Your year ahead 09058-170096*

24 OCTOBER - 22 NOVEMBER

2016 is all about self-belief. The first week of January is not too soon to start making moves. Events of mid-March, late June and November expand your horizons, whether you travel or new and exciting opportunities arise.

Your year ahead 09058-170097*

SAGITTARIUS

23 NOVEMBER - 22 DECEMBER

Divine providence and lucky breaks will play a part in 2016's story, and you'll work hard. Home moves, possibly abroad, could be on the agenda for some, and in the event of purchasing a property anywhere, less

Your year ahead 09058-170098*

23 DECEMBER - 19 JANUARY

Expect improvements and opportunities in spring and late autumn. Success could be achieved in the law courts and through academic work, and some Capricorns may see their name in print.

Your year ahead 09058-170099*

AQUARIUS 20 JANUARY - 19 FEBRUARY

Although this is a year when business ought to come before pleasure, travel is a big part of the Aguarian picture, especially from autumn onwards. Indeed the notion of going where you have never gone before is a big theme for 2016.

Your year ahead 09058-170100*

20 FEBRUARY - 20 MARCH

Plan your time – plan everything – and keep your eye on finances. The most eventful periods of the year fall around the time of the eclipses in Pisces - 9th March and 16th September.

Your year ahead 09058-170101*

For weekly and year ahead predictions, visit womanandhome.com/horoscopes

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Your stars

w&h astrologer Penny Thornton's January predictions, with more forecasts at womanandhome.com

CANCER

23 JUNE - 23 JULY

January and February are key months for relationships in general and your love life in particular. Fate may seem to be taking you by the hand, but once events have unfolded you get to make a choice.

Weekly update 09058-170544*

AQUARIUS

20 JANUARY – 19 FEBRUARY

Health and fitness go to the top of the agenda – the 13th is the day to launch your programme for the brand new you. The weekend of the 24th thrusts a relationship into the spotlight – is it yes I do or no I don't?

Weekly update 09058-170551*

PISCES

20 FEBRUARY - 20 MARCH

Friends are a priority, whether your support and advice helps them make important decisions or because you are embarking on a group project. Even if there are teething troubles, you'll get there in the end.

Weekly update 09058-170552*

ARIES

21 MARCH - 20 APRIL

The faster you try to go, the less you'll achieve. Slow and steady wins the race, plus by taking the time to go back over old ground you'll make a discovery. Despite evidence to the contrary, a decision made on or near the 5th could be reversed.

Weekly update 09058-170541*

TAURUS

21 APRIL - 21 MAY

If you're travelling, prepare to go via the pretty route. Until the 25th, Mercury will be slowing down the wheels of commerce and communication, and people won't be helping either. Build in a lot of wiggle room.

Weekly update 09058-170542*

GEMINI

22 MAY – 22 JUNE

Money talks and it will be talking long and loud in January. History also has a part to play in the narrative. Expect dates to be put back and people to be slow in responding to you. Place yourself on hold for a while and do your homework.

Weekly update 09058-170543*



Star sign of the month

CAPRICORN

23 DECEMBER – 19 JANUARY Look to the 10th for the real start to the New Year. This is the moment to set your compass to success. Have no regrets about who or what is no longer part of your journey; it's time to shed some ballast. For your weekly update, call 09058-170550*

CAPRICORN: THE MONTHS AHEAD You have a long way to go in 2016 in terms of miles, experience and achievement, and you'll take some of your biggest steps in the spring. To hear a detailed breakdown of the next few months, phone Penny on 09058-170099*

LEO

24 JULY - 23 AUGUST

This is a slow month, so be prepared for delays and detours, and not everyone is going to keep their word. The full moon in Leo (24th) helps you reach a conclusion, after which it is onward and upward.

Weekly update 09058-170545*

VIRGO

24 AUGUST – 22 SEPTEMBER

A holiday or break from routine will set you thinking of changing your whole lifestyle, and this is the year to turn a maybe into a reality. However, before you start the ball rolling, it seems you must make a journey into the past.

Weekly update 09058-170546*

LIBRA

23 SEPTEMBER – 23 OCTOBER

Your year gets off to an impressive start. You have mountains to climb and the cosmos gives you a helping hand by removing an obstacle that has long hindered your progress. Once past the 10th, you'll be on the home stretch.

Weekly update 09058-170547*

SCORPIO

24 OCTOBER - 22 NOVEMBER

You don't have to fulfil all your New Year resolutions by the end of January, so be patient. If you haven't heard from someone, do not assume that the situation has turned pear-shaped. This is a month of transitions.

Weekly update 09058-170548*

SAGITTARIUS

23 NOVEMBER – 22 DECEMBER

Venus in your sign attracts good people towards you, in some cases for very romantic reasons. However, it may also be time to admit that the party is over. The period around the 9th brings a relationship to crunch point. Weekly update 09058-170549*

MY OVES RHATES

Harrison Ford, 73, lives in LA with his actress wife Calista Flockhart and their adopted son Liam, 14. He has four children from two previous marriages

How did it feel stepping back onto a Star Wars set after all this time?

It should have felt ridiculous! It was 30-plus years ago. Yet here I was. I will tell you that it felt great. I wasn't sure it would, but it was the right company and the right director [JJ Abrams]. Larry [Kasdan] wrote a wonderful story, and I was proud to once again be involved.

Is it important for you to keep on working? A man should never rest on his laurels. He should prove his mettle every day. That has nothing to do with being macho, but with taking responsibility for yourself and your family. I still struggle with a lot of the problems I've always had, but I know how to better manage it.

What single quality has been most responsible for your success? The thing that makes me good at what I do - if I'm good at all - is not feeling special, so that whomever I'm talking to doesn't feel as if he's with someone who thinks he's on a higher plane because he's in the film business. When I come home from work I don't feel like a movie star. It's a seamless process. You work, you come home. You may have a few things to say to your son if he's behaving oddly.

What advice do you offer your son, Liam? This is my fifth time around. Kids are forever. Part of raising them is that you help them think their way through life and not tell them too much, but be supportive. Every time you do it, you probably can't help but get a little better.

Star Wars: The Force Awakens is out on 17 December

My loves...

FLYING I love the skill and discipline that flying a plane demands of you. It gives you a different perspective on the world when you're high above a mountain range or

looking down on the desert. There's an undeniable exhilaration you experience from that.



CARPENTRY [Ford built houses before his acting career took off.] I'm grateful I was able to earn enough so I didn't have to take acting iobs I would have hated.

STUNT WORK I like running, jumping and falling down. I like to do physical acting because I want people to feel the pain. You can't feel the pain if the camera is focused on a stuntman.

JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING I have a ranch there. It's full of wildlife and streams and the like. It's on the Snake River and much the same as it was 150 years ago.



My hates...

PUBLIC SPEAKING Acting on a large set with lots of people around you is one thing, but I still have a great deal of difficulty in getting up and talking in front of a crowd. It's a mixed bag of terror and anxiety.



BULLIES I was beaten up and harassed in school because I was very shy and small. I was a puny little guy and I didn't have the strength or courage to do anything. But I outlasted them all.

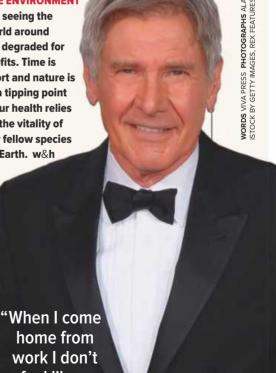


THE BLADE **RUNNER SET It was** the hardest set I've ever worked on because I think we worked 50 nights in a row – and it was always raining.



I'm seeing the world around me degraded for profits. Time is short and nature is at a tipping point - our health relies on the vitality of our fellow species on Earth. w&h





home from work I don't feel like a movie star"



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